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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Cong marks 3 yrs in office, distributes 1.52L land deeds in Tumakuru

CM Siddaramaiah during the celebration marking three years of the Congress government, in Tumakuru on Tuesday —X/@SIDDARAMAIAH

TUMAKURU, 19 MAY

The Congress government in Karnataka on Tuesday distributed 1,52,492 land title deeds in Tumakuru as part of its three-year completion celebrations, while also aiming for a Guinness World Record for the largest such distribution in a single district.

Officials said the documents included 1,06,000 under e-Pauti Andolana, 24,256 under Darkhastu Podi, 20,666 title deeds for revenue villages and 1,570 under Podi Mukta Abhiyan.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and cabinet colleagues attended the event, where several departmental projects were launched and foundation stones laid virtually across the district.

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the initiative was aimed at resolving decades-old land record disputes and ensuring legal clarity for landholders.

He said the government was systematically addressing historical errors in land documentation and working to provide "clear, undisputed ownership rights" to citizens.

He added that the programme reflects the administration's focus on governance reforms that directly impact rural households.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, in a post on X, said the distribution of over 1.52 lakh documents in a single district was a historic achievement and a model for the country.

He said the Congress government's "people-centric governance" had translated promises into action and claimed that Karnataka was witnessing visible change through welfare and development programmes.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said the government had fulfilled a majority of its 2023 election commitments and highlighted the importance of the revenue department's flagship initiative, noting that long-pending land record issues had been a major challenge for rural citizens. He said large-scale documentation drives were improving transparency and reducing disputes across Karnataka. —*Agencies*

Putin to attend BRICS summit in Delhi on 12 Sept

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Russian President Vladimir Putin will attend the BRICS summit in New Delhi on 12–13 September, a Kremlin aide has said. India, as the current chair of BRICS, will host the annual summit of the grouping. Kremlin aide for international affairs Yury Ushakov, quoted by state-run TASS, said Putin will participate in the summit and a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping is planned on the sidelines. Putin last visited India in December 2025 for the 23rd India–Russia Annual Summit. Earlier this month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov attended a BRICS conclave in New Delhi.—*PTI*

Fertilisers scarce, take up organic farming: Agri Min

BHUBANESWAR, 19 MAY

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday said fertilisers are not easily available in the international market, urging states and farmers to adopt organic and natural farming as an alternative.

Addressing the Eastern Zonal Agriculture Conference, he said India is facing global supply constraints and rising fertiliser costs, and the government is sourcing from around 28 countries to ensure availability. He stressed preventing diversion and misuse of subsidised fertilisers and warned against indiscriminate use without soil testing, saying it harms soil health. He also highlighted a Rs 41,000 crore fertiliser subsidy allocation.—*PTI*

Umar Khalid's bail plea to care for sick mother rejected

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

A Delhi court on Tuesday dismissed the plea of jailed activist Umar Khalid seeking 15 days of interim bail, noting that the reasons cited by him were not reasonable. Khalid asked to attend a relative's death ritual and take care of his mother who has to undergo a surgery. The defence argued that Khalid was the only one in his immediate family able to take care of his mother, and that he had complied with all conditions imposed by the court on previous occasions. Khalid and others were arrested for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the 2020 riots that left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured in northeast Delhi. —*PTI*

3 coaches of Ujjaini Express derail near Rishikesh

RISHIKESH, 19 MAY

Three coaches of the Ujjaini Express derailed near the Yog Nagari railway station in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, when the train was being moved from the platform to the railway yard, officials said on Tuesday. There were no passengers on board at the time, they added. The train operates between Indore and Rishikesh. It collided with the buffer located at the terminus of the shunting line, throwing one coach off the tracks and damaging two others. Workers have detached them from the train. Officials said all train operations continue to run normally. Yog Nagari railway station manager Surendra Kumar Sharma said a probe has been ordered into the incident. —*PTI*

SC allows euthanasia for 'rabid, dangerous' dogs

Says kids, elderly mauled by dogs; cites right to live with dignity

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday for the first time allowed euthanasia of rabid, incurably ill or demonstrably dangerous stray dogs, in a significant ruling aimed at addressing rising threats to public safety.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria said civic authorities may resort to euthanasia in areas where stray dog populations have reached alarming levels and where repeated attacks or bites pose a continuing danger.

The ruling came in a suo motu case initiated in July last year over reports of dog bites leading to rabies, particularly among children. The bench also dismissed pleas seeking recall of its earlier directions on relocation and sterilisation of stray dogs.

—MAGANIFIC

The court observed that the "right to live with dignity" under Article 21 includes the right to move freely without fear of dog attacks, noting repeated incidents involving children, elderly persons and travellers.

It directed states and Union Territories to strengthen Animal Birth Control (ABC) infrastructure, including setting up at least one fully functional ABC centre in every district with trained personnel, surgical facilities and logistics support.

The bench also ordered that dogs picked up from public spaces must not be returned to the same locations after sterilisation or vaccination, and criticised the "discernible absence" of sustained state action.

The court warned that continued non-compliance with its directions would be viewed seriously, citing ongoing reports of attacks and rising public safety concerns across the country. —*PTI*

TMC's Jahangir to not fight Falta repoll

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

In a dramatic twist, Falta's Trinamool Congress (TMC) candidate Jahangir Khan on Tuesday withdrew from the 21 May repoll, a move that could virtually hand BJP a walkover in the constituency.

TMC quickly distanced itself from the decision, calling it Khan's "personal choice" and alleging a post-poll atmosphere of intimidation in Falta. Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari, however, mocked Khan for "running away", claiming he quit after realising he would not even find polling agents on the ground.

Khan, who had built a flamboyant "Pushpa"-inspired image during campaigning, said he took the decision in the interest of Falta's development and peace. He claimed Chief Minister's announcement of a special development package influenced him.

"I am the son of Falta… I want the area to grow," he said

However, TMC leaders maintained confusion over the move, with spokesperson Arup Chakraborty saying the party had no clarity on the reason behind the withdrawal. The party also alleged intimidation after results were declared on May 4, claiming arrests of over 100 workers and vandalism of offices.

The Election Commission had ordered a repoll in Falta after allegations of irregularities during 29 April polling. Khan's name will still remain on the EVM despite the withdrawal deadline having passed.

Adding to the controversy, civil contractors staged protests alleging Khan demanded 7–10 per cent commission ("cut money") for work orders through his office, claims he has not responded to. —*PTI*

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Transport unions call off bus strike after HC order

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Bus transport unions in Karnataka on Tuesday withdrew their proposed statewide bus strike scheduled for 20 May after the Karnataka High Court directed them to resolve their demands through discussions with the government.

The High Court, hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), observed that a strike would inconvenience the public and advised both sides to hold talks.

Union leaders said the government had announced a 12.5 per cent wage hike without consulting the Joint Action Committee, while employees had demanded a 15 per cent or higher increase. The unions also sought retrospective implementation of the revised pay from 1 January, 2024.

They alleged that despite repeated requests, the government had not convened meetings with either the Chief Minister or the Transport Minister.

Addressing a press conference, union leader Vijay Bhaskar said workers had the right to protest and accused the government of trying to suppress dissent. Another union representative said no opportunity for negotiations had been provided before the court's intervention and noted that the wage dispute had remained unresolved for nearly 28 months. —*PTI*

KSRTC workers had announced indefinite strike from 20 May —*PTI*

Petrol, diesel rates hiked by 90P; 2nd raise in a week

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Petrol and diesel prices went up by about 90 paise per litre on Tuesday as state-run retailers moved to reduce losses triggered by a surge in global crude oil prices due to the Iran conflict. The increase follows a Rs 3-per-litre hike on Friday. Petrol and diesel prices are now at their highest levels since May 2022.

Petrol at Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) pumps in Bengaluru will now cost Rs 107.15 per litre, while diesel prices will be Rs 95.04 per litre.]

Global crude oil prices have surged by more than 50 per amid Iran war Iran and disruptions to oil shipments through Hormuz.

Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Sujata Sharma said on Monday that state-run oil firms were losing around Rs 750 crore per day even after the first hike. The government had earlier said fuel retailers had kept prices low to shield consumers from inflation. Opposition parties, however, claimed the government was merely delaying price revisions until after key state elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week urged citizens to conserve fuel, encourage remote working and reduce non-essential travel as energy prices pressure foreign exchange reserves.

—*PTI*

Indian found dead at B'desh High Commission

CHATTOGRAM, 19 MAY

Police have recovered the body of an Indian national, Narendar Dhar, 38, from the premises of the Indian Assistant High Commission in Chattogram, Bangladesh. He served as an assistant security officer at the mission.

The body was found on Tuesday morning at the mission located in the Khulshi area, authorities said.

Officials said the circumstances leading to his death are yet to be ascertained. —*Agencies*

India to buy US' Apache, Howitzers

WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

The US has approved a possible sale of support services and related equipment for Apache helicopters to India for an estimated cost of $198.2 billion, the US Department of State said. The principal contractors will be the Boeing Company and Lockheed Martin, it added.

The Department added that India has also requested to buy AH-64E Apache sustainment support services; US Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support; technical data and publications; personnel training; and other logistical and programme support.

M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers and AH-64E Apache attack helicopters —US ARMY & BOEING

The Department additionally approved a possible sale of sustainment support for M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers to India, for an estimated cost of $230 million, with the principal contractor being the UK-based BAE Systems. Ancillary items; spares; repair and return; training; technical assistance; field service representative; depot capability; and other logistical and programme support will be included in the sale.

The Department said the sale will support US foreign policy and national security objectives by strengthening the US-Indian strategic relationship. —*PTI*

CBSE refutes login issues with re-evaluation portal

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said on Tuesday that its Class 12 re-evaluation portal is functioning properly, even as students reported on X that it had crashed and they could not log in or submit applications.

CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj told PTI he had received no complaints bar "a few" phone calls about log-in issues, and that users' weak internet connections could be causing problems. He advised students to retry after some time, adding that the portal worked when he logged in as a dummy candidate. He clarified that the CAPTCHA feature had been removed due to reported visibility issues.

This comes after the CBSE on Tuesday allowed students to apply for re-evaluation and verification of Class 12 answer sheets till 22 May.

Students can access the rechecked sheets between 26 May and 29 May.

The board has lowered answer sheet viewing fees to Rs 100 from Rs 700, and verification or validation fees to Rs 100 from Rs 500.

Answer re-checking fees are Rs 25 per question. —*PTI*

'IGNORANT NGOS'

MEA, Norway scribe face-off as PM skips presser

OSLO, 19 MAY

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) found itself on the defensive during a briefing in Oslo after questions from Norwegian journalists over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's limited interaction with the press during his Europe visit.

It also hit out at "ignorant NGOs" over the world press freedom.

The criticism came after Modi did not take questions at a joint statement with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

Norwegian journalist Helle Lyng on Monday posted a video on X showing Modi walking out after the joint statement and said she was not allowed to ask a question.

"Norway has the number one spot on the World Press Freedom Index, India is at 157th, competing with Palestine, Emirates & Cuba," the journalist wrote with the video.

At the MEA briefing, Lyng asked why India should be trusted and whether human rights violations would stop, and further questioned whether Modi would begin taking questions from the press.

MEA Secretary Sibi George delivered a lengthy defence of India, referring to its civilisational history, contributions such as yoga, chess, and Covid vaccine diplomacy but did not answer her questions. He said despite India having one-sixth of the world's population, it does did not generate one-sixth of the world's problems.

He defended India's press freedon, saying the country had a vast media ecosystem with over 200 television channels in Delhi alone, and criticised reports by what he termed "ignorant NGOs.". —*Salar News*

City NRI held for having 7 rounds of live bullets

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

An NRI from the US, Arman Mutaahar, aged 34, was arrested for illegal possession of seven live ammunition rounds after leaving them at a city hotel, police said. The hotel manager of Jayamahal Palace Hotel reported on 6 May that the guest, who checked in on 27 April, contacted staff, saying he had left a loaded magazine behind. Staff found a Ruger magazine with seven live rounds. Despite repeated contact, the suspect did not retrieve the magazine. Police seized the ammunition, and Mutaahar admitted to unlawfully possessing it. He was produced before court on 7 May, granted 10 days' police custody, and later remanded to judicial detention for further investigation. *—PTI*

—ANI

Pvt fraud case filed against Shivam Associates owner

BELAGAVI, 19 MAY

The first private fraud case has been registered against Shivam Associates owner Shivanand Neelannavar, already under CID investigation for a multi-crore deposit scam. Krishna Apras filed a complaint on Tuesday, claiming to have invested nearly Rs 5 lakh. Earlier, the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies had lodged a complaint alleging Shivam Associates collected money without complying with Cooperative Societies Act rules. Neelannavar was arrested, and the CID took over the case involving hundreds of crores. Apras deposited Rs 5 lakh in April with promises of 36 per cent annual returns. The CID secured court permission and took Neelannavar into custody for 10 days for further inquiry. ***—SALAR NEWS***

Burglars loot 10 shops in 1 night in Dakshina Kannada

UDUPI, 19 MAY

Burglars targeted 10 shops and offices in Dakshina Kannada's Belthangady town in a single night, stealing cash and damaging CCTV systems to destroy evidence. The thefts were reported from Court Road and nearby areas late Monday. Thieves allegedly stole around Rs 1.5 lakh from Samruddhi Enterprises after removing CCTV memory cards. Offices of TH Real Estate and several advocates were also targeted. At Mathrushree Hotel, burglars stole Rs 7,000, while Rs 2,000 was stolen from Shabari Enterprises. Police are investigating the incidents. ***—Salar News***

KGF police arrest robber after 34 years

KOLAR GOLD FIELDS, 19 MAY

A man wanted for a house theft committed in 1992 has been finally traced and arrested by Ooorgaum Police after 34 years. The accused, Ravi, a resident of South Tank Block in Coromandel, had remained untraceable despite multiple police efforts. Superintendent of Police Himanshu Rajput, during a review of pending cases, directed the police to reopen the investigation and intensify efforts. Special teams tracked Ravi through information that he had moved from Andhra Pradesh to Bengaluru, working as a hotel assistant before quitting recently. Police discovered that Ravi had been living near Bengaluru's Majestic bus stand and was admitted to a rehabilitation centre. He has been remanded to judicial custody. *—SALAR NEWS*

No Gujarat model in K'taka: CM on 3 yrs

At 3rd anniversary, CM attacks BJP, Centre

TUMAKURU, 19 MAY

> **You should know the condition the lives of ordinary people in Gujarat (under BJP govt) have reached. At Morbi in Gujarat in the first week of May this year, a tragedy occurred there before which the country hung its head in shame. A poor labourer's family was living in a small rented house paying Rs 2,000 rent. That family could not even pay the Rs 2,000 rent. Because the rent was not paid, the house owner raped the poor labourer's wife and 13-year-old daughter. This is the Gujarat model**
>
> -Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

Chief Minister on Tuesday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that the "Gujarat model of development" was "hollowed" in the wake of the Morbi incident, while the welfare oriented "Karnataka model" was better. He attacked the BJP and Modi over inflation, unemployment and alleged communal politics, on the on the eve of the completion of three years of the Congress government in the State.

Speaking at the 'Steering Karnataka towards development' programme in Tumakuru, Siddaramaiah said his government had implemented welfare guarantees worth more than Rs 1.40 lakh crore while also carrying out development works and systemic reforms and laid the laid foundation stones for development works worth over Rs. 682 crore in Tumakuru district.

Noting that Modi was chief minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014, and has been the Prime Minister since, Siddaramaiah referred to the recent incident in Morbi district in Gujarat where a man who failed to pay a rent of Rs 2,000, allegedly allowed the owner of the house and his aide to repeatedly rape his wife and 13-year-old daughter.

"It causes shivers to realise into whose illiterate and cruel hands we have handed over the reins of this country," the Chief Minister said.

Siddaramaiah claimed that 15,946 acres of land has been given to the Adani Group of Companies at the rate of Rs 1 to Rs 32 per square metre in a state where people cannot pay Rs 2,000 rent per month.

On the other hand, the Congress government in Karnataka had fulfilled promises made before the 2023 Assembly elections.

Targeting the BJP in Karnataka over its politics, Siddaramaiah accused the party of "spreading hatred and weakening the economy".

Criticising fuel and cooking gas prices, Siddaramaiah said commercial LPG prices had sharply increased in recent months and alleged that the Centre's policies had worsened inflation. "Because of Modi, petrol-diesel and gas prices have touched the sky".

Siddaramaiah clamed his government had helped increased the SSLC pass percentage to 94.10 per cent, and that the guarantees were being implemented with no corruption.

Meanwhile, Home Minister G Parameshwara, who "spontaneously" organised the event, downplayed rumours that he wanted to become the Chief Minister, and instead renewed his push to rename Tumakuru as Bengaluru North. *—Agencies*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar during the Congress' three year celebration in Tumakuru, on Tuesday *—PTI*

Cong celebrating zero dvpt: BJP

Ashoka alleges corruption, rising debt burden

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

> **The Congress government did not hold a Sadhana conference; it was a funeral for a dead government... Can we say that this government is alive when more than 550 newborns have died in the last 15 months due to lack of infrastructure and basic medicines?... More than 40 thousand teacher posts are vacant, more than 6,500 libraries in rural areas have been closed. The future of children is being played with due to SEP-NEP confusion**
>
> -BY Vijayendra, State BJP President

The BJP launched a scathing attack on the Congress, with State BJP President VY Vijayendra stating that the ruling party had achieved of a record of "zero development."

"For what achievement have you organised this convention? What exactly have you achieved in the last three years?" Vijayendra told reporters in Bengaluru, referring to the Congress' three-year celebration event being promoted as a "Guarantee Festival". He dubbed the guarantees as an "election gimmick" that would not last long.

"More than 2.5 lakh government posts are lying vacant while unemployed youth are protesting," the Shikaripura MLA charged, claiming that the government had neglected employment for youth.

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka, took the charge further on X, alleging mass corruption and fiscal indiscipline.

"The State's debt burden has crossed Rs 8 lakh crore. A debt burden of more than Rs 1 lakh on every Kannadigas - is this a celebration?" he stated.

He stated that the government spent d Rs 3.16 crore in lawyer fees from the treasury to prevent a CBI investigation into the MUDA scam, in which Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was also implicated.

Claiming that the State's power companies (ESCOMs) have amassed a total debt of Rs 42,750 crore, with BESCOM alone owing Rs 6,211 crore, Ashoka asked "Is it an achievement to impose tariff hike on the poor and bankrupt the power supply companies?"

He claimed that the Public Works Department had awarded a Rs 10,000 crore tender for Hoskote, Malur road projects to a company under CBI investigation, alleging the Congress was supporting corrupt companies, and that Rs 16 crore had been illegally transferred through fake checks and bank transactions at the Bellary KIADB office.

On the Bowring Hospital wall collapse which killed at least seven people, Ashoka, alleged that the Lokayukta's suo motu inquiry described it as "the result of maladministration".

Similarly, Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya claimed the Congress was "imposing cess and taxes on every thing", and that the government had hiked prices for "Metro, bus, milk, butter, electricity, water and hospital expenses".

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy claimed that "the Congress has failed to provide the MSP fixed by the central government to sugarcane and maize growers". *—Salar News*

'Mentally ill' DKS can't fix garbage mess, waterlogging: JD(S)

JD(S) on Tuesday posted a video of Manyata Tech Park in Bengaluru flooded after the heavy rains a day earlier *—SCREENGRAB*

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

The JD(S) alleged that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar was a "mentally ill" individual who was "doing absolutely nothing to respond to the citizens' hardships".

The JD(S) handle on X alleged that Shivakumar, who also holds the Bengaluru Development portfolio, had promised last year, to fix the waterlogging issue in Manyata Tech Park. Yet, the area still flooded this year.

"Is this your Brand Bengaluru?" it mocked.

In another post, it stated that the pothole issues in the City and "the garbage problem has not been solved yet. Your achievement as the Bengaluru Urban Development Minister is zero".

"You are behaving like a mentally ill person in despair of not getting a chair. Corrupt," it added. "The government and 'untouchable' people like you speaking against HD Kumaraswamy is just showing desperation."

JD(S) leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy called for an open debate on the Bidadi township project, while Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy said "3,500 families have submitted objection petitions saying no to the township. When those families are being pushed to the streets, should we stay silent?" *—Salar News*

ULSOOR LAKE REOPENS

After Ulsoor Lake was drained and dried for desilting for the two months, water has finally brought the lake back, and a sailing boat of the MEG centre took a joy ride on the lake, on Tuesday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

4 labourers injured in quarry blast in KG Halli

MALUR, 19 MAY

Four labourers were injured, one of them critically, after explosives used for rock blasting accidentally detonated near Kadirenahalli village in KG Halli gram panchayat limits on Tuesday afternoon.

The injured, Chiranjeevi, Ramu, Hemanth and Raj, are all from Rampur village in Koppal district who have been working in the field for years, police said.

The quarry reportedly belongs to Hanumanthu of Kadirenahalli and operations were allegedly managed by Manjunath of Jangaanahalli. The accident occurred during blasting work on rocky terrain between Kadirenahalli and Balleri villages.

Police said the workers had drilled two holes in a boulder and filled them with explosives. While one charge exploded, the second reportedly failed to detonate. As the workers attempted to reload and the unexploded charge, it suddenly went off, injuring all four labourers. One worker suffered serious head injuries.

Residents alleged that despite restrictions imposed on large-scale blasting activities, illegal quarrying continue unchecked. Residents recalled that Upalokayukta B Veerappa had visited quarries and directed officials to take effective measures to curb illegal quarrying. *—Salar News*

20,00 chemists to join strike against e-pharma today

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Over 20,000 chemists from across Karnataka will join a nationwide 24-hour shutdown on 20 May called by the AIOCD (All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists), in protest against e-pharmacies and alleged regulatory violations.

According to the AIOCD, over 15 lakh chemists and druggists across the country will keep their medical stores shut on Wednesday to protest against illegal online sale of medicines and "unprofessional competition" by corporate firms.

Karnataka Chemists and Druggists Association (KCDA) president R Raghunatha Reddy said that in Karnataka, nearly 26,000 chemists, including around 6,500 retailers in Bengaluru, are expected to shut down shutters.

He said the strike had become unavoidable due to repeated violations of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act by online pharmacies.

Reddy alleged that e-pharmacies were offering discounts, disrupting the regulated margin structure of 16-20 per cent, and undercutting small retailers.

Meanwhile, sources said that all major pharmacy chains, hospital-attached medical stores, Jan Aushadhi Kendras, and AMRIT Pharmacy outlets across the country will remain open on 20 May despite the nationwide shutdown call. This comes after a delegation of AIOCD met the national drug regulator to present their grievances. *—Agencies*

Jumbo succumbs to injuries day after clash at Dubare camp

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

A day after a tourist was crushed to death at the Dubare camp in Karnataka during a clash between two trained elephants, one of the animals also succumbed to its injuries on Tuesday, officials said.

The elephant called Marthanda sustained severe injuries to the stomach and legs when the other elephant, Kanjan, charged at him and rammed him. He was being treated at a hospital. A post-mortem is being conducted.

Tulasi, 33, a tourist from Tamil Nadu, also died during the clash when she became trapped under Marthanda as he fell, said officials. Her husband and child escaped unhurt.

Karnataka Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment Eshwar Khandre has expressed grief over the deaths of Marthanda and the tourist, calling the incident "deeply tragic."

He added that instructions have been issued not to use Kanjan for the Dasara celebrations in the future.

He further directed authorities to ensure that the public maintains a distance of 100 feet to watch elephant bathing and asked that a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) be prepared to ensure tourist safety. *—PTI*

'MENTAL CRUELTY'

Woman commits suicide over dowry harassment in Ballari

BALLARI, 19 MAY

A 24-year-old woman, Aishwarya, died by hanging herself at her parents' residence in Kampli town, Bellary district, on 17 May, due to alleged dowry harassment and mental torture by her husband and in-laws. Police confirmed she took her own life by hanging from a ceiling fan. Her husband, Pradeep Kumar, a veterinarian with the Animal Husbandry Department, has been detained in connection with the case.

In her suicide note, Aishwarya accused her husband and in-laws of mental cruelty and dowry harassment. The couple had married over a year and a half ago through a love marriage. Following her death, her father filed a complaint, leading to a case registered under sections 80 (dowry death), 85 (cruelty by husband or relatives), and other relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Dowry Prohibition Act.

24-year old Aishwarya *–x*

Superintendent of Police Suman D Pennekar stated, "We have secured her husband in connection with the case. All allegations are being looked into and further investigation is underway."

The incident highlights ongoing issues of dowry-related violence in the region. *—PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Darshan meets family amid suicide rumours

KOLAR, 19 MAY

Amid remours of Kannada actor Darshan's death by suicide, his wife Vijayalakshmi on Tuesday visited the Kannada actor at Parappana Agrahara Central Prison here where he has been lodged in connection with the Renukaswamy murder case, officials said.

Karnataka Director-General of Prisons and Correctional Services Alok Kumar reportedly dismissed the rumours as "completely baseless" and clarified that no such incident had taken place.

Darshan spent about 30 minutes speaking with his wife and son during a meeting held under CCTV surveillance. All interactions between Darshan and Vijayalakshmi were recorded on camera. He met his family under the supervision of a jail official, a prison source said. – Agencies *—PTI*

Child dies as power line falls during rain

KOLAR, 19 MAY

A seven-year-old boy, Shaik Takayur Rahaman, was electrocuted last night when a live power line fell on him at around 10.00pm while he was standing outside his relative's house in Poolsha Mohalla under Gulpet police limits. The incident occurred amidst heavy rainfall, which caused power lines to snap at multiple locations in the area. Shaik Imtiaz, his father, works as a hotel assistant.

The police reported that the boy was in front of the house when the incident happened. Syed Khasim, Sub Inspector of Police, said the boy was standing in front of the house when the power line got snapped and fell on him, resulting in electrocution. The police officer added that residents had previously reported sparks

emanating from the power lines and made complaints to BESCOM authorities two weeks ago.

However, no action was taken, which police believe contributed to the tragedy. Gulpet police have registered a case and are investigating the matter further. Authorities have expressed concern over the delay in repairing the damaged infrastructure, which led to the fatal incident. *—Salar News*

HC to hear CBI, RG Kar victim's parents on probe

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

The Calcutta HC said on Tuesday that it will hear the requests of the CBI and the RG Kar rape-murder victim's parents' plea for further investigation into the crime on 21 May.

The parents of the doctor, who was raped and murdered inside the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, have said that more than one person was involved.

One Sanjay Roy was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Sealdah sessions court for the crime.

Meanwhile, a neighbour of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder victim moved the Calcutta HC on Tuesday, claiming that he was a prosecution witness in the case and that his house was vandalised after announcement of the WB Assembly election results. The lawyer of Sanjib requested permission to file a petition and an urgent hearing seeking protection. — *PTI*

Jahangir ran away from re-poll: Suvendu

Suvendu leads roadshow, promises jobs for post-poll violence victims

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Tuesday mocked Trinamool Congress (TMC) candidate Jahangir Khan for withdrawing from the 21 May Falta repoll, claiming he "ran away" as he would not find polling agents on the ground.

Campaigning in South 24 Parganas district, Adhikari took repeated digs at Khan's self-styled "Pushpa" image, built around the popular line "Pushpa jhukega nahi" (Pushpa never bends).

"Where is self-styled Pushpa? He had no other way, as he won't get a polling agent, so he decided to run away," Adhikari told reporters.

Suvendu holds a roadshow for the BJP candidate in Falta, Debangshu Panda, on the final day of campaigning for the 21 May re-poll—*PTI*

In another swipe, he said, is leaving."

"Jhuk gaya... Pushpa had said 'jhukega nahi'; now he says he

Adhikari led a high-voltage roadshow in support of BJP candidate Debanshu Panda, with BJP flags lining roads and supporters showering flowers during the procession.

Addressing supporters, he claimed Falta residents were witnessing a "festival-like atmosphere" and said people were "feeling free to vote after years". He alleged that political intimidation had prevented fair participation in earlier polls and asserted that voters would now get a chance to vote without pressure.

He also announced that one family member of each BJP worker allegedly killed in post-poll violence after the 2021 Assembly elections would be given a government job. Adhikari further promised legal support and rehabilitation for BJP workers allegedly targeted in political violence, saying false cases would be fought legally and justice ensured.

Dissent in TMC

Meanwhile, Khan's withdrawal triggered unease within the TMC during a legislators' meeting at Kalighat attended by Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee.

According to party sources, several MLAs questioned why Khan faced no disciplinary action despite stepping away just days before polling. Some remarks were seen as indirect criticism of Abhishek Banerjee, under whose Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency Falta falls. —*PTI*

Rath murder suspect booked in 3 more cases

Police have filed three cases against a 25-year-old local youth in connection with the killing of the aide of Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari, an officer said on Tuesday. Raj Kumar Singh, 25, was arrested on 11 May by the CBI from Muzaffarnagar in connection with Chandranath Rath's murder in West Bengal. Rasra Circle Officer (CO) Alok Gupta said Raj Singh was booked in two cases at the Rasra Police Station and one at the Gadwar Police Station. Charge Sheets have been filed against the Ratopur village resident in these cases, he said. Rath, the executive assistant to Adhikari, was shot dead in Madhyamgram on 6 May.

—*PTI*

MESSI TOUR ORGANISER SUES EX-WB MINISTER, EX-DGP FOR RS 100 CR

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

The Lionel Messi' tour organiser, Satadru Dutta, has lodged a complaint against former TMC's former West Bengal sports minister Aroop Biswas and three others, including the state's former DGP, alleging they were responsible for the chaos that unfolded at the Salt Lake stadium last December and that he was made a "scapegoat" for it.

He has also filed two cases, a Rs 50 crore defamation case, and a case demanding a compensation of Rs 50 crore.

Dutta lodged the complaint at the Bidhannagar South police station on Monday, in which he also named the former DGP and TMC RS MP Rajeev Kumar, the minister's kin and Kolkata Municipal Corporation councillor Juin Biswas and I&CA department secretary Shantanu Basu, holding them responsible for the stadium mayhem.

The event organiser, who was subsequently arrested and spent 38 days in jail, sought police intervention, alleging unlawful intrusion into restricted security zones of the field, collapse of perimeter control and disruption during the programme held at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan, also known as Salt Lake stadium, on 13 December 2025.

"My family and I were threatened if I spoke. I had no choice but to keep mum and accept whatever punishment they had decided for me. I would never have filed this complaint, had there not been a change of guard in the state," Dutta said.

Dutta filed his complaint barely hours after the newly appointed sports minister of the BJP government, Nisith Pramanik, announced his decision to reopen the Messi case and order a fresh probe.

The WB government sanctioned the prosecution of former RG Kar Medical College and Hospital principal Sandip Ghosh in connection with a case of financial irregularities linked to the institution.

An order issued on Monday by the Department of Health stated the Governor had given sanction for Ghosh's prosecution under BNS and PMLA provisions. — *PTI*

The chaos that unfolded at the Salt Lake stadium in Kolkata last December during the visit of football icon Lionel Messi—*PTI*

Former U'khand Chief Minister Khanduri dies at 91

DEHRADUN, 19 MAY

Bhuvan Chandra Khanduri, former Uttarakhand chief minister and senior BJP leader, died in a private hospital here today at the age of 91 following a prolonged illness, his daughter and Assembly Speaker Ritu Khanduri Bhushan confirmed. Known as 'General Sahab', he was a retired Indian Army Major General. Khanduri served twice as chief minister, first in 2007 and again in 2011, and was also a Union Minister, notably overseeing the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, where he was credited with executing the Golden Quadrilateral project. President Murmu and Chief Minister Dhami expressed condolences, highlighting his dedication to development. —*PTI*

Delhi HC seeks AAP leaders' response in contempt case

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Delhi High Court issued notices to AAP leaders including Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and others, in a criminal contempt case over their social media posts criticising Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma. The bench, Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dudeja, gave the politicians four weeks to respond, listing the next hearing for 4 August. Justice Sharma initiated proceedings after alleged vilifying posts related to the excise policy case, including a misleading video. She noted that the leaders had created a "parallel narrative" and that "remaining silent" was not judicial restraint but surrender. The court will appoint an amicus curiae to assist it during the trial. —*PTI*

— *PTI*

SP man booked for anti-Brahmin remarks

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 19 MAY

Rajkumar Bhati, the spokesperson of the Samajwadi Party, has been booked for allegedly making objectionable remarks against the Brahmin community. An FIR was registered at Muzaffarnagar's Civil Lines police station following a complaint by Jasvir Singh, with police citing Sections 356 and 196 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Act. Senior Superintendent Sanjay Kumar confirmed the investigation, with protests from organisations like the Jat Mahasabha demanding action. Police officials said further investigations are underway as Bhati faces allegations of promoting enmity and defamation, amid protests over his comments.—*PTI*

'Crisis will hit youth, small traders'

RAEBARELI, 19 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Tuesday that an "economic shock" is coming and hat it will not hit "Adani, Ambani, or Modi," but the youth, labourers, and small traders.

"Very, very tough times are coming," the leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha told reporters here.

Gandhi said a major economic "storm" not seen for many years is on the way. He also accused the prime minister of not following his own call for austerity.

"Instead of taking action, Modi is telling the country not to go on foreign trips. But he is making rounds across the world," he said. He also said the "Ambani-Adani structure" will not last long.

"The structure, which he (Modi) has made, the one of Adani and Ambani, will crumble. And, sadly, the loss will be felt by commoners. In other words, they will remain in their palaces, and the entire shock will be borne by the people of Uttar Pradesh," Rahul said.

On Tuesday, Rahul Gandhi, the Lok Sabha MP representing Raebareli, landed at Lucknow, and left for his constituency.

Rahul Gandhi at the 'Gram Vikas Samvad' in UP's Bachhrawan dist—PTI

ARUNACHAL CM

The Congress asked why Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has not been removed even after the Supreme Court had directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to probe the charges of corruption against him and his family. — *PTI*

Fuel price hike among world's lowest outside GCC: BJP

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The BJP defended the 90-paise hike in petrol and diesel prices, triggered by the West Asia conflict, saying that the increase is the lowest anywhere in the world outside the GCC.

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by about 90 paise per litre on Tuesday, marking the second increase in fuel rates in less than a week after state-run oil firms ended a nearly four-year freeze on revisions.

On Friday, petrol and diesel prices were raised by Rs 3 per litre for the first time in more than four years, as surging global crude prices following the Iran war forced state-run fuel retailers to pass on part of their losses. — *PTI*

Shah says Maoism over amid firefight

JAGDALPUR, 19 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Tuesday that Naxalism was completely eradicated from the country before the 31 March deadline due to the courage and supreme sacrifices of our security forces. Meanwhile, an encounter took place between security forces and Maoists in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Tuesday, a senior police officer said.

Addressing a press conference here, Shah said certain dates hold significance in the "Naxal-Free India Campaign." On 13 December 2023, when the BJP government in Chhattisgarh took oath, the campaign for the complete eradication of Naxalism began, he said.

On 24 August 2024 when a meeting of DGPs from all states was convened to make the country Naxal-free by 31 March 2026, Shah said.

"The third date, which you all know, 31 March 2026, (deadline set by the Centre to eliminate Naxalism from the country). Due to the courage and supreme sacrifices of our security forces, Naxalism has been completely eradicated from the country ahead of the set deadline," Shah said

Meanwhile, an encounter took place between security forces and Maoists in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Tuesday, a police officer said.

No casualty was reported in the incident that took place near Kedabir village, SP Amit Renu said. — *PTI*

UDF differences delay portfolio allocation

T'PURAM, 19 MAY

Disagreements have emerged within the ruling Congress-led UDF over the allocation of certain departments to alliance partners, delaying allocation of ministerial portfolios in the newly sworn in V D Satheesan-led cabinet in Kerala.

Senior Congress leader K Muraleedharan said on Tuesday that there were differences within the UDF over who should be given the Fisheries and Higher Education. He however assured that these would be resolved soon. He told reporters that in order to resolve the concerns of the alliance partners, some "rearrangements" will have to be made within the party.

"The delay is due to possibility of changes in the portfolios of some ministers. There are arguments over the Higher Education and Fisheries department," the Congress leader said adding, "They will be resolved soon," he told reporters here.

Earlier, differences had also surfaced over who should be the next chief minister of the state. —*PTI*

UDF govt plans white paper on finance

T'PURAM, 19 MAY

The UDF government on Tuesday announced the formation of a special committee to prepare a white paper on Kerala's financial position.

The announcement came at the first UDF Cabinet meeting here chaired by Chief Minister V D Satheesan.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting of senior Finance Department officials chaired by the chief minister.

According to a CMO statement, the committee will be headed by former Cabinet Secretary Dr K M Chandrasekhar. Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) K R Jyothilal has been appointed as the Convener. —*PTI*

SP-Congress alliance will continue, says Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, 19 MAY

- Akhilesh added that talks would focus on ensuring electoral success instead of seat sharing

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav said on Tuesday that alliances with partners would continue in future elections, asserting that the formula will be "victory, not seats. We have experience of alliances and the Samajwadi Party has always ensured gains for its allies. We have never betrayed anyone. The alliance that exists will continue," Yadav said, when asked whether Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and he would be seen campaigning together in the coming elections. He added that future discussions would focus on ensuring electoral success rather than bargaining for seats. The remarks are important due to speculation over opposition unity during the Uttar Pradesh Assembly next year. —*PTI*

Palaniswami, AIADMK rebels stick to their respective stands

CHENNAI, 19 MAY

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami held a crucial meeting of senior office-bearers on Tuesday here to strengthen his position in the party, while rebels refused to budge and continued to pose a challenge to his leadership.

While Palaniswami, a day after extending an olive branch to the rebels to come and talk to resolve problems, held a 2-hour long meeting of loyalists at the party headquarters, he did not accept the demand of the rebels to convene the general council.

Also, none from the rebel group, led by senior leaders CVe Shanmugam and SP Velumani responded positively to Palaniswami's invite to join hands.

Emerging from the Palaniswami held meeting, senior leader OS Manian said a "constructive debate" was held, adding that nothing was spoken on convening the general council.

Party leader BV Ramana, a Palaniwami loyalist, said the meeting was attended by about 80 district secretaries. All the office bearers "solidly stood" with Palaniswami, and the party would work out a strategy to emerge victorious, he said. — *PTI*

THIRD INDIA-NORDIC SUMMIT

India, Nordic nations to focus on green tech

OSLO, 19 MAY

India and Nordic countries have decided to elevate their relationship to a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership, as Prime Minister Modi held talks with his Nordic counterparts, focusing on clean energy, sustainability, innovation, emerging technologies and other key areas.

In a joint statement after the 3rd India-Nordic Summit in Oslo on Tuesday, Modi also said that India and Nordic nations "have a clear and united stand on terrorism: No compromise, no double standards."

PM Modi speaks during the Nordic-India Summit in Oslo. Norwegian PM Jonas Gahr Støre and Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson are also seen —*PTI*

Modi also said that in this era of global tensions, India Pand the Nordic nations will continue to work together to strengthen rules-based global order. "Whether it is Ukraine or West Asia, we will continue to support the earliest resolution of conflicts and efforts towards peace," he added.

"Our shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and multilateralism makes us natural partners," said Modi, who was joined by Iceland PM Kristrun Frostadottir, Finnish PM Petteri Orpo, Danish PM Mette Frederiksen, Norwegian PM Jonas Gahr Store and Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson.

"Today, we decided to elevate India-Nordic relations to a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership. With this green technology partnership, we will ensure a better future for the entire world," Modi said, noting that the format was established eight years ago to energise and accelerate India's relations with the Nordic countries.

This will combine innovation with scale and talent, while advancing our shared commitment towards sustainability, trusted technologies and a better future for humanity, he said.

Prime Minister Modi said that the two sides have agreed that reform of multilateral institutions is both "necessary and urgent." — *PTI*

— PTI

ED arrests godman in Rs 70 cr money laundering case

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

A special court in Mumbai granted permission to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to arrest Ashok Kharat, a self-styled godman, in connection with a Rs 70 crore money laundering case. Kharat, already facing rape and fraud charges, was produced before the court from Nashik jail. The ED sought his arrest to unearth the larger conspiracy, identify beneficiaries, and trace the money trail, which may have cross-border implications. The agency alleges Kharat laundered over Rs 70 crore through benami accounts after opening 60 accounts in one day, using victims' documents without consent. He also allegedly acquired properties and conducted transactions worth crores through extortion and selling items like tamarind seeds and honey as 'blessed' items. The investigation involves 12 cases of sexual exploitation and financial fraud. —*PTI*

M'rashtra human samples sent for avian flu test

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

The Maharashtra health department will send eight poultry worker samples from Nandurbar district to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) for human avian flu testing. These workers, in contact with poultry or involved in culling, have shown no symptoms but are being given medication as a precaution, district health officer Ravindra Sonawane told PTI. Nandurbar has been affected by bird flu. The samples, including nasal swabs, will be sent to NIV, Pune, on Tuesday. No government employees are among those tested. The workers are being administered Tamiflu tablets as a precaution. —*PTI*

Communal flare up in Pune sees stone pelting

PUNE, 19 MAY

A minor dispute among teenagers sparked a midnight clash between two communities in Kondhwa, with stones hurled at police attempting to control the situation. No injuries were reported, and a case has been registered. The incident occurred between 11pm and 2am when a petty fight escalated as adults joined in. Police rushed to the scene, but stones were thrown at officers. Additional forces were deployed to restore order. A video on social media showed people blocking traffic near Kondhwa police station. The police are investigating the case and have detained some individuals involved in the violence. —*PTI*

Man, female friend attacked with sticks in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, 19 MAY

A man and his female friend were allegedly assaulted with sticks by a group of people in Odisha's Berhampur city, triggering outrage after a video of the incident went viral on social media. The incident took place on Monday night when they were travelling on a motorcycle, police said. The motorcycle was allegedly intercepted by a group of people in the Bijipur area, and the man was dragged onto the road and assaulted with sticks along with the woman, they said. Injured persons were admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital, they added. Additional Director General (Law and Order) Sanjay Kumar said the accused had been identified and raids were underway to arrest them. The incident drew sharp political reactions after videos of the assault went viral. Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik flayed the government over the state's law and order situation. —*PTI*

SC: Rs 3,000 cr liability cap for N-mishap sensitive issue

SC bench asks if India has a robust compensatory mechanism

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

This is a "very sensitive legislative policy issue", the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while hearing a plea challenging the provisions of a 2025 law that caps the liability at Rs 3,000 crore in the event of any unfortunate incident at a nuclear power plant.

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi observed that the issues raised in the plea challenging various provisions of the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, touches on the "economic policy".

"Our concern is that if an unfortunate event or any accident takes place and any person suffers an injury or damage, do we have a robust compensatory mechanism for that purpose," the bench said during the hearing.

Representing the petitioners in the court, advocate Prashant Bhushan said there are three main issues, including the capping of the total liability.

"If a nuclear accident takes place, the damage done is hundreds of times higher than that," Bhushan argued, while referring to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident that occurred in Japan in 2011.

He argued that the government can do whatever it wants by way of a policy, but it cannot sacrifice the rights of citizens. "This is a very sensitive legislative policy issue," the bench said.

It also held that technology has to come from outside and wondered that if the liability is not capped, then who will come to operate here. It said the State will also compensate if any such unfortunate incident takes place.

The bench observed that the capping on liability does not tinker with the court's power to determine the compensation to be awarded to a victim.

"The SHANTI Act, 2025, brought into force recently, allows private sector and foreign companies to operate nuclear power plants in India. It also capped the liability of these operators at an absurdly low level and exempted the supplier from any liability," the plea says. -PTI

SC TO GOVT: RETHINK PIL ON RECOVERY OR DESTRUCTION OF STOLEN DATA

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to consider a PIL as a representation seeking a robust mechanism to recover or destroy the personal data of Indians allegedly stolen and stored on foreign servers.

The plea sought a direction to the Centre to recover or destroy stolen personal data from foreign jurisdictions. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was hearing a PIL filed by Nitish Kumar, a cyber security consultant. CJI asked petitioner to approach the Centre. —*PTI*

SC COLLEGIUM APPROVES 9 JUDICIAL OFFICERS FOR MADRAS HC

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Supreme Court collegium has approved a proposal for appointment of nine judicial officers and 10 advocates as judges of the Madras High Court.

The collegium headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant approved the names for appointment in a meeting held on 18 May.

The judicial officers whose names have been approved are Dr P Murugan, MD Sumathi, S Alli, C Thirumagal Chandrasekar, Dharmalingam Lingeswaran, Karthikeyan Balathandayutham, Shanmugam Karthikeyan, Baluchamy Murugesan, and N Gunasekaran. Advocates names have also been approved. —*PTI*

INNOCENT LIVES MUST NOT BE BARGAINING TOOLS
LET PEACE SPEAK LOUDER THAN GUNS
JUSTICE, PEACE & HUMAN DIGNITY
UNITED FOR PEACE IN MANIPUR
PROTECT INNOCENT LIVES
KIDNAPING IS NOT JUSTICE

A protest in Imphal for the release of hostages —*ANI*

Manipur protests to save Naga hostages

IMPHAL, 19 MAY

The Koubru Range Liangmai Women's Union, along with civil society organisations of Kanglatongbi and nearby villages under the aegis of LPNR-M, on Tuesday organised a mass rally demanding the immediate and unconditional release of six Naga civilians.

The protesters alleged that the civilians were abducted by Kuki armed militants from Leilon Vaiphei village in Kangpokpi district on May 13, and urged authorities to take swift action to ensure their safe release.

The rally began from Makhan village and concluded at Namdilong village gate, with protesters carrying placards and raising slogans seeking urgent intervention from both the Centre and the state government.

Speaking during the rally, a resident of Makhan village, Irish Tuimai, appealed to the authorities to take immediate steps to rescue the hostages.

"We are here demanding the immediate release of the innocent civilians who were abducted on May 13 from Leilon Vaiphei village. It has already been a week, yet the hostages have not been able to return home," she said.

She further warned that any delay in rescuing the hostages could escalate tensions and endanger the lives of the abducted civilians.

"We urge both the state and central governments to take immediate action. Any further delay in rescuing hostages will escalate the situation." she added. Tuimai claimed that there was "solid proof" of abduction. —*ANI*

Noida dowry death postmortem reveals damage to internal organs

NOIDA, 19 MAY

The postmortem report of a 24-year-old woman, whose family alleged she was murdered over dowry demands in Greater Noida, has found a brain bleed, rupture of internal organs and multiple contusions on the body of the deceased.

Viscera samples of the deceased woman have been preserved for forensic analysis.

According to the postmortem report of Deepika Nagar, bleeding was present from the victim's left nostril and mouth. The report stated that a hematoma (blood leaking from large blood vessels) was present in the middle and left side of the brain.

The report, accessed by PTI, further stated that the liver, spleen and right kidney were ruptured. The report also mentioned contusions on the arm and thigh.

The viscera has been preserved to ascertain the presence of any toxic substance, according to the report.

Family member of Deepika Nagar (inset), a 24-year-old woman who died allegedly after falling from terrace in Greater Noida —*PTI*

Earlier on Tuesday, police at the Ecotech-3 police station had said that the exact cause of death was not yet clear and doctors had not given a final opinion.

Deepika died on Sunday night after allegedly falling from the terrace of her three-storey matrimonial home in Jalpura village in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar district.

Her family, however, has alleged that she was murdered by her in-laws over dowry demands and claimed it was neither a suicide nor an accident. —*PTI*

Bhopal lawyer wanted in wife's killing denied bail

BHOPAL, 19 MAY

The suspicious death of 33-year-old model and actress Twisha Sharma has taken a critical turn as a Bhopal court has rejected the anticipatory bail plea of her absconding lawyer-husband, Samarth Singh.

Following the court's decision on Monday, the Bhopal Police officially announced a cash reward of Rs 10,000 for any information leading to his arrest.

The court earlier granted anticipatory bail to Samarth's mother, retired judge Giribala Singh, who is also an accused in the case.

Twisha was found hanging at her marital home in Bhopal's Katara Hills area on 12 May, months after her December 2025 marriage to Samarth. While a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probes the case, her family alleges she was systematically tortured and murdered over dowry, charges denied by Giribala Singh. -PTI

THE HOLY PRESENCE

Haji Syed Salman Chishty, the 26th-generation Gaddi Nashin of the sacred Dargah of Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishty (L) in Ajmer Sharif and Chairman of the Chishty Foundation, made a historic appearance at the Canada Literature Festival (CLF) 2026, held from 13-18 May in Mississauga and Toronto, Ontario - *SALAR*

T'gana: Violations detected in Lulu Hypermarket

HYDERABAD, 19 MAY

The Telangana Food Safety officials conducted an inspection at Lulu Hypermarket here and detected "multiple serious violations" across the premises.

Based on a complaint, the inspection was conducted and violations pertaining to in-house kitchen, retail area and butchering area were observed and approximately 150 Kg of food articles including sweets, oils, flour and pulses with "infestation were seized/discarded".

The Commissioner of Food Safety, Telangana in a post on 'X' on Monday night said, "Food samples lifted on suspicion of adulteration or excess artificial colour usage and pest-infested besan flour have been sent for analysis".

According to officials, poor hygiene conditions were observed, leftover food stored in refrigerators was discarded on the spot besides presence of pests and decayed vegetables were found.

Near-expiry packed food articles with torn/ misleading labels were also detected.

The officials said insect infestation was found in besan flour, atta and dals and packed food articles with expired FSSAI licence. There were violations also with regard to labelling, display including absence of nutritional information, FSSAI licence details and manufacturer address.

In the butchering area, drains were clogged emitting pungent smell, posing serious public health concern, the officials added. —*PTI*

Hindus pray at Bhojshala temple in MP

DHAR, 19 MAY

Hindu groups organised a "victory celebration" at the historic Bhojshala complex in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district on Tuesday, days after the ASI granted the community unrestricted access to the monument for worship.

A large number of devotees from Dhar and other places thronged the complex as "Mahavijay Mahotsav" began with prayers to Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati) and installation of "akhanda jyoti" (eternal flame), organisers said.

Bhoj Utsav Samiti member Gopal Sharma said a "satyagraha" is organised at Bhojshala every Tuesday, and this week's programme is being observed as a "Mahasatyagraha" in view of the recent verdict of the MP High Court and decisions of the ASI. —*PTI*

People offer prayers at the Bhojshala complex following MP High Court verdict declaring the site a Hindu temple, on Tuesday —*PTI*

Probe report on justice Verma given to LS Speaker

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

An inquiry committee investigating allegations against Justice Yashwant Varma -- against whom removal proceedings were initiated over the alleged discovery of unaccounted cash from his official residence -- has submitted its report to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

The report, which was presented in accordance with statutory requirements under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, on Monday, will be laid before both Houses of Parliament in "due course", the Lok Sabha Secretariat said.

The Monsoon Session, which usually commences in the third week of July, will be the next time Parliament is likely to meet.

The three-member committee was formed by the speaker on August 12, 2025. During a fire that broke out in the official residence of Justice Varma on the night of 14 March, 2025, firefighters allegedly discovered massive amounts of burnt currency at a storeroom in the Delhi bungalow. He was then a judge of the Delhi High Court and was later repatriated to Allahabad High Court An in-house committee constituted by then CJI Sanjiv Khanna concluded that Justice Varma had "active or tacit control" over the specific storeroom where the cash was allegedly hidden. —*PTI*

EDUCATION MISMANAGEMENT

Classes 6 to 8 students in Kerala govt schools may get textbooks late

KOCHI, 19 MAY

With just two weeks left for government schools to reopen, a senior INTUC leader and president of the KBPS staff and employees union on Tuesday said that textbooks for classes 6 to 8 could take around 45 more days to be ready for distribution.

K K Ibrahimkutty, the president of the Kerala Books and Publications Society (KBPS) staff and employees union, told a TV channel here that, as per the latest figures, only close to 80 per cent of the required books have been printed.

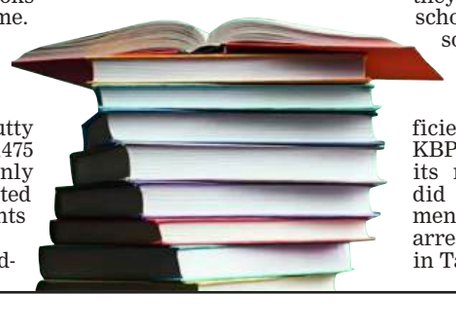
He alleged that when the previous government claimed that all books would reach students before schools reopened for the new academic year, only 20 per cent of the books had been printed at that time.

"After the issue was highlighted by the media, the process gathered speed," he claimed.

Giving details, Ibrahimkutty said of the total 3,57,05,475 books to be printed, only 2,85,51,000 have been printed till May 18, which accounts for 79.96 per cent.

Of the printed books, binding of 2,48,95,000 books has been completed, he said.

Now, 71,54,476 books are yet to be printed, and a total of around 1.08 crore have to be bound, he further said.



"Each day, a maximum of 3 lakh books can be bound if the machines work without any problems. At that rate, it will take around 45 days to complete the process, and then they have to be supplied to the schools, which will also take some time," Ibrahimkutty said.

He alleged that all this occurred due to the inefficiency and slow pace of the KBPS management, including its managing director, who did not inform the government of the crores of payment arrears due to the paper mills in Tamil Nadu. —*PTI*

3 women held in a sex racket in Kochi

KOCHI, 19 MAY

Three women have been arrested here in connection with an alleged sex racket being run under the guise of offering women modelling opportunities abroad, police said on Tuesday.

Two women were arrested on Monday, and another had been apprehended a few days ago following complaints by the affected persons, they added.

The complainants have alleged that they were taken abroad on the pretext of modelling assignments or other jobs and then were drugged and raped there, police said. Kochi City Police Commissioner S Kaliraj Mahesh Kumar said a young woman claimed that she met the accused at a common place and then was taken abroad to work in a beauty salon. —*PTI*

DEMOLITION DRIVE IN BANDRA

The Western Railway on Tuesday started a massive four-day demolition drive at Garib Nagar, a slum settlement. The drive in Mumbai's Bandra East suburb is removing over 400 unauthorised structures spread across 500m near the railway tracks. Emotional scenes erupted at the scene with residents claiming they did not receive any prior notice. Officials say only 100 people are eligible for rehabilitation. The cleared land near Bandra East station will be used for suburban rail upgrades and improve access to the upcoming Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train's Bandra-Kurla Complex station

— *WESTERN RAILWAY*

Data centre heat can raise temperatures by 2.2°C

A new study conducted in the US' hottest city Phoenix – also one of the world's hottest urban regions - suggests that waste heat released from data centres can increase air temperatures in downwind neighbourhoods by as much as 4 degrees Fahrenheit, or 2.2 degrees Celsius.

Waste heat produced by a single data centre can surpass the amount emitted by 40,000 households in the US, according to lead author David Sailor, professor and director of Arizona State University's school of geographical sciences and urban planning.

Air-cooled condenser arrays - which condense turbine exhaust steam - can discharge air heated to 14-25 degrees Fahrenheit (about 8-14 degrees Celsius) above the surrounding air temperature, creating thermal plumes that move downwind over neighbouring areas, researchers said.

"They're such a concentrated load of electricity consumption and hence heat emissions that we became concerned about the impact that they could have locally, and also in the downwind neighbourhoods," Sailor said.

"As we do more measurements under different kinds of atmospheric conditions, I think we're going to see more significant impacts around data centres," Sailor said.

The researchers said that while previous studies have used remote sensing data from satellites to estimate the heat impact of data centres historically, the study, published in the Journal of Engineering for Sustainable Buildings and Cities, is the first to directly measure air temperatures downwind and upwind of data centres to record real-time effects of waste heat on surrounding communities.

The team mounted data-logging high-accuracy and fast-response temperature sensors on cars that drove around Phoenix-area data centres and throughout nearby neighbourhoods during June 18-October 25, 2025.

Waste heat produced by a single data centre can surpass the amount emitted by 40,000 households in the US — *FREEPIK*

Using multiple cars allowed the researchers to simultaneously measure temperatures upwind and downwind of four selected facilities ranging from a 36-megawatt single-building data centre in Mesa to a 169-megawatt colocation campus in Chandler (both are cities in Arizona).

The chosen centres reflected the typical design of "hyperscalers" that house thousands of servers and use primarily air-based cooling systems, the team said.

"Five traverses at four facilities in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area, ranging from a 36 MW (megawatt) single-building data centre in Mesa to a 169 MW colocation campus in Chandler, reveal downwind air temperature warming as high as 2.2 degrees Celsius, with average downwind air temperatures 0.7-0.9 degrees Celsius warmer than corresponding upwind areas," the authors wrote.

"Thermal signatures were detectable at distances up to 500 m (metres) from facility perimeters," they said.

Sailor said that contributing to an additional heat island magnitude of even one degree or two degrees can significantly impact lives, especially in places where extreme heat already poses public health risks.

A one-degree boost in air temperature, for example, is enough to drive higher use of air conditioning across entire neighbourhoods.

Those air conditioners, in turn, put even more heat into the surroundings, the lead author said. —*PTI*

HOW DATA CENTRES DISCHARGE HEAT

Often described as the "backbone of the digital economy", scientists are increasingly warning that they may also become a new source of urban heat pollution. Data centres are massive facilities packed with thousands of servers that operate continuously. These servers consume enormous quantities of electricity and generate heat as a byproduct. To prevent overheating, operators rely on extensive cooling systems such as industrial chillers, cooling towers and giant fans. The heat removed from servers is then discharged into the surrounding atmosphere, creating localised warming.

URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT

The warming caused by data centres compounds the Urban Heat Island effect, where cities become significantly hotter than surrounding rural areas due to concrete surfaces, asphalt roads, vehicles and industrial activity.

DATA CENTRES ADD TO THIS BURDEN IN THREE MAJOR WAYS:

1. Direct heat discharge from cooling systems
2. Higher electricity demand, which increases heat released from power generation
3. Additional cooling demand in nearby buildings due to rising temperatures

SALAR ساہر

Ruskin Bond at 92: Ageing softly, storytelling endlessly

A verdant garden in bloom, birds chirping in the backdrop, a warm sun making its way across the horizon and lots of children of course. India's favourite author is 92 and the celebration could not have been more Ruskin Bond-ish - wisdom and wit wrapped into one perfect afternoon.

Recovering from a spinal surgery and confined to a wheelchair, he is frail but the zest is intact as he regales his audience with stories about the time he had 20 aloo tikkis, his abiding love for India, friendship and going gently into old age. Moving seamlessly from one mood to another. Quite like his books.

"When I was a boy in Dehradun I used to go to the chaat corner at the clock tower and I would eat golgappas, tikkis and chaat. AIso, I had the record for some time for eating the largest number of tikkis. I ate 20 tikkis in one go and I'm still alive," Bond, who turns 92 on Tuesday, told PTI, chuckling as he went back in time.

Few writers can boast 75 years of storytelling, over 500 published works and generations of devoted readers, fewer still can laugh about it with Bond's trademark ease.

The birthday this time is in Dehradun for health reasons, away from his home Ivy Cottage in misty Landour higher up in the Uttarakhand hills.

The launch of his latest book 'All-Time Favourite Friendship Stories' last week doubled as a warm pre-birthday gathering.

Asked which character from his literary world he would invite to celebrate his 92nd birthday, the reply was prompt. His best friend Somi from 'The Room on the Roof', his debut book in 1956 when he was just 17.

"I haven't seen him for many many years. I wish he was here, and we'd have a great time," he smiled.

Somi is a warm-hearted Sikh boy who acts as devoted best friend to Rusty -- Bond's semi-autobiographical alter-ego - especially in 'The Room on the Roof'.

The celebrated writer is unabashed about his love for India. And if there is one piece of advice the storyteller wants his young readers to carry into adulthood, it is this: go wherever life takes you, but always come back to India.

"... because India is your heart and soul. I left India when I was 17, and I came back three or four years later because I knew I wasn't going to be happy in the West, and my heart and soul was here, and I missed everything about India. Not just people or places, but the atmosphere," he told excited students, many clutching greeting cards.

"... An atmosphere that you won't find anywhere else, because India is so varied and yet, in spite of all those differences, you are cohesive, you come together as one, as one great being, not just a nation, but a continent, a double nation, a nation within nations," Bond added.

His literary career began not from ambition, but from an inability to survive chemistry, maths, and physics, Bond joked.

Born to British parents Edith Clarke and Aubrey Bond in 1934 in Kasauli, Bond was only four when his mother separated from his father and married an Indian.

Though Bond's custody was handed to his father, he soon relocated to his grandmother's house in Dehradun. He grew up in Jamnagar, Shimla, New Delhi, and Dehradun before finally making Landour his home in 1963.

"I was about 16 or 17 when I started writing here in Dehradun," he said. He has since received numerous awards and honours, including the Sahitya Akademi Award for English writing in 1992, the Padma Shri in 1999, the Padma Bhushan in 2014 and the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship in 2021.

Undercutting the profundity with humour, Bond added that he has been keeping busy but not working too hard. Tongue firmly in cheek, he said he has never been a fan of "overwork", right from his debut novel 70 years ago.

All these decades later, Bond's spirit remains high. His latest, Penguin Random House India's (PRHI) latest instalment in the 'All-time Favourite' Bond series focuses on friendship. —*PTI*

Few writers can boast 75 years of storytelling, over 500 published works and generations of devoted readers, fewer still can laugh about it with Ruskin Bond's trademark ease — *PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Court fight leaves both Elon Musk & OpenAI's Sam Altman bruised

After prevailing in its court fight with Elon Musk, OpenAI — the ChatGPT maker valued at $852 billion — remains on track for what could be one of the largest initial public offerings in history.

Musk had been seeking the ouster of his fellow OpenAI co-founder, CEO Sam Altman, among other changes to the company. But with testimony from witnesses who called Altman dishonest, he's hardly emerged unscathed.

At a time of growing concern about artificial intelligence's impacts, the landmark trial also shed new light on the flaws and outsize ambitions of the small number of billionaires steering the development of the breakthrough technology.

The trial was a reminder, said Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute, "of how much the future of AI still depends on a remarkably small group of powerful tech figures and their personal rivalries".

"The trial highlighted not just a dispute between Musk and Altman, but a broader disconnect between the people building these systems and many of the people increasingly expected to live and work alongside them," Kreps said.

Musk had accused OpenAI, Altman and his top lieutenant Greg Brockman of betraying a shared vision for it to remain a nonprofit dedicated to guiding AI's development for the good of humanity. Altman, in turn, accused Musk of trying to hobble the ChatGPT maker for the benefit of his own AI company.

On Monday, the nine-person federal jury in Oakland, California, found that Musk waited too long to file his lawsuit and missed a statutory deadline. After a three-week trial that included hundreds of pieces of evidence and some of tech's biggest names on the stand, the jury deliberated less than two hours before returning a verdict essentially on a technicality.

Musk said he will appeal and called Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, who oversaw the trial, a "terrible activist Oakland judge, who simply used the jury as a fig leaf" to create a bad precedent. "She just handed out a free license to loot charities if you can keep the looting quiet for a few years!" Musk wrote on his social media platform X.

It was the second major courtroom loss for Musk in less than two months.

Gonzalez Rogers made it clear early on in the trial that she did not want it to become a debate over AI's dangers.

But the unresolved questions about the risks AI poses for job losses, mental health issues and even humanity's extinction served as a backdrop for the proceedings, with protesters decrying both Musk and Altman becoming a regular presence outside the federal courthouse. Demonstrators' signs declared the real losers were regular people whose lives are being upended by an industry controlled by out-of-touch billionaires who can't get along. "This is a funny microcosm of this moment where we have this hugely important technology that's being developed by for-profit corporations run by people like Musk and Altman and not as the part of some government-led initiative," said Columbia Law School professor Dorothy Lund.

The trial laid bare some of Silicon Valley's messy inner workings, with emails, diary entries and sometimes embarrassing text message exchanges shown as evidence. Texts between Altman and a former OpenAI executive became meme fodder and the subject of parody songs. The trial shed light on Altman's removal from the OpenAI board in 2023, before he returned to his role a few days later.

Several witnesses including two ex-board members, Helen Toner and Tasha McCauley, said there were concerns about Altman's truthfulness.

Throughout the trial, OpenAI brushed off Musk's allegations of betrayal as an unfounded case of sour grapes aimed at undercutting the company's rapid growth and bolstering Musk's own artificial intelligence company, xAI, which is now part of SpaceX.

Both Musk's SpaceX and OpenAI are planning massive initial public offerings, as is Anthropic, which was formed by a group of seven ex-OpenAI leaders. "It's a lot of dirty laundry that doesn't look very appealing, I suppose, and so that may hurt their reputation and may have downstream effects on all kinds of things that you can't even anticipate," said University of Richmond Law School professor Carl Tobias. "But you know, AI is likely to come forward and continue even if it isn't OpenAI." —*PTI*

Elon Musk had been seeking the ouster of his fellow OpenAI co-founder, CEO Sam Altman. But with testimony from witnesses who called Altman dishonest, he's hardly emerged unscathed. The duo went from close friends and co-founders of OpenAI in 2015 to bitter adversaries — *AI*

QUOTE of THE DAY

I am not afraid and not deterred. No order from The Hague will deter me from continuing to lead an offensive policy against terrorist. I'm sorry to disappoint those 'justice seekers'

—ITAMAR BEN-GVIR,
Israel's National Security Minister amid reports that the ICC is seeking warrants against him and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich for crimes against Palestinians

Arabs asked me to halt planned strikes on Iran, Trump claims

Says he's paused them 'maybe forever, possibly for a while'

WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

US President Donald Trump has said he halted fresh strikes on Iran at the request of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, claiming that "we've had very big discussions with Iran" that could lead to an acceptable deal.

"I have been asked by the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, and the President of the United Arab Emirates, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to hold off on our planned military attack of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was scheduled for tomorrow (Tuesday)," Trump posted on Truth Social on Monday.

However, Trump added that Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Daniel Caine have been instructed to prepare to "go forward with a full, large-scale assault of Iran, on a moment's notice" if a deal isn't reached.

"We were getting ready to do a very major attack tomorrow. I've put it off for a little while, hopefully, maybe forever, but possibly for a little while, because we've had very big discussions with Iran and we'll see what they amount to," Trump told reporters at the White House. He said the Arab countries asked the US to put off the strikes for "two or three days" because they think that that a deal is close.

"And if we can do that where there's no nuclear weapon going into the hands of Iran, and if they're satisfied, we will be probably satisfied," he said.

Posters near the Strait of Hormuz saying 'entry of American soldiers and dogs is prohibited' —PRESSTV

IRAN STANDS DEFIANT

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran that the "contradictory and excessive behaviours" of the US was a major obstacle to diplomacy, while a Pakistani official said that both countries "keep changing their goalposts".

Pakistan, meanwhile, has deployed around 8,000 troops and several jets to Saudi Arabia under a mutual defence pact which states that if one country is attacked, the other is compelled to defend.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei criticised Germany for its "hypocracy" after drones hit the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant in UAE.

"Open attacks by the US and the Israeli regime on Iran's secured nuclear facilities do not provoke condemnation," he posted on X. " (But) when a false-flag operation takes place – one whose authorship even the UAE has refused to attribute to Iran – those same voices suddenly invoke the solemn language of international law and regional security". —*Agencies*

Israel has seized roughly 1,000 sqkm across Gaza, Lebanon and Syria since the 7 October attacks, reports Financial Times

Israel sprays phosphorus in Lebanon

Israel continued to bombard Lebanon, despite recently extending the ceasefire. Lebanese state-run National News Agency reported that Israel targeted a number of farmers with three incendiary phosphorus shells while they were harvesting watermelons in fields near the town of Al-Mansouri in the Tyre district. No injuries were reported. Israel also issued evacuation warnings for several towns in southern Lebanon, as strikes and gunfire killed at least four people. At least 3,000 people have been killed in Lebanon and a million people displaced.

Iran mulls 50M euro bounty on Trump, Netanyahu

TEHRAN, 19 MAY

An Iranian official has announced a new bill that will ratify payment of 50 million euros for the assassination of "gambler" Donald Trump and "child killer" Benjamin Netanyahu. It was brought in response to the 28 February, 2026, strikes on Tehran that killed former supreme leader Ali Khamenei. Meanwhile, Netanyahu's testimony in his ongoing criminal trial has been postponed again, after his lawyer submitted a request citing his busy schedule. The trial relates to "Case 4000", or the Bezeq-Walla affair, where Netanyahu faces bribery charges. —*AGENCIES*

Palestinian man dies after being shot by IDF

JERUSALEM, 19 MAY

A Palestinian man who was shot by Israeli soldiers while attempting to cross the barrier from the West Bank into Israel has died of his wounds, Palestinian health officials confirmed. The 32-year-old Mahmoud Al-Amleh was shot in Beit Ula, near Hebron, on Sunday morning. Paramedics rushed him to hospital in Hebron for surgery. His cousin, Hamdan Al-Amleh, told The AP that he was part of a group heading into Israel. This marks the second Palestinian shot dead in similar circumstances in less than a week. Since October 2023, at least 47 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank. —*PTI*

US to admit 10,000 Afrikaner refugees from S Africa

WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

The Trump administration plans to admit up to 10,000 white South African refugees into the US in coming months, citing discrimination and persecution of Afrikaners. The State Department said it would admit up to 17,500 Afrikaners by September, citing an emergency response to "unforeseen developments" in South Africa. The South African government dismissed the claims as baseless. President Donald Trump has accused South Africa of systematic violence against white farmers though experts say there's no evidence of targeted racial violence. —*PTI*

Kenya fuel strikes halted after 4 killed in protests

NAIROBI, 19 MAY

Public transport operators in Kenya on Tuesday suspended a nationwide strike for one week to allow talks with the government, ending two days of protests that left four people dead and more than 30 others injured. Around 348 people were arrested and will be charged with taking part in illegal protests. This came after Kenya's diesel prices increased by a record 23.5 per cent and gasoline by 8 per cent on Friday. The government blamed the Iran war's effects on energy supplies. The opposition claimed it was due to corrupt businesspeople who want higher profit margins. Interior Minister Kipchumba Murkomen said negotiations would take place within seven days, as transport operators demanded price reductions. —*PTI*

Putin visits China, to meet Xi, days after Trump's trip

BEIJING, 19 MAY

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday night on a two-day state visit for talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, days after US leader Donald Trump visited China.

Xi and Putin will exchange views on bilateral ties, cooperation in various fields, as well as international and regional issues of mutual interest, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.

This is Putin's 25th visit to China, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing on Monday, emphasising close strategic ties between Russia and China as well as strong friendship and rapport between the two leaders.

"The two sides will take this visit as an opportunity to continue to promote the development of China-Russia relations to a higher level, which will inject greater stability and positive energy into the world," Guo said.

Ahead of the visit, Putin released a video message where he called Xi his "long time good friend" and said that ties between Russia and China were reaching "unprecedented levels".

"Mutual settlements are now conducted almost entirely in rubles and yuan," he noted.

Notably, Iran is a close strategic ally of both China and Russia, and Trump visit to Beijing was seen as an attempt to persuade Xi to help get the Strait of Hormuz open.

REGRETTING UKRAINE?

Jiakun dismissed a report by the Financial Times claiming that Xi suggested to Trump that Putin might "regret" his invasion of Ukraine.

However, Jiakun said: "The information you mentioned does not match the facts and is completely fabricated out of thin air."

China is the biggest buyer of Russian oil, despite Western sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Kyiv. —*Agencies*

ROMANIA SHOOTS UKRAINIAN DRONE

A Romanian F-16 jet belonging to NATO air policing forces in the Baltics on Tuesday shot down what is believed to have been a Ukrainian drone over southern Estonia, authorities said. "Most probably, it was (a) drone which was, let's say, meant to hit some Russian targets," Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur said.

This comes as Ukraine has been targetting deeper into Russian territory. Russia said that one of the largest Ukrainian drone strikes on the country killed at least four people, including three near Moscow. The strikes have caused some tensions within the Baltic states, and between them and Russia. Latvia's government collapsed recently due to stray Ukrainian drones in its airspace.

Teens shoot dead three in US mosque, then kill themselves

SAN DIEGO, 19 MAY

Two teenage shooters opened fire at a San Diego mosque on Monday and killed three men before killing themselves a few blocks away, police said.

The attack at the Islamic Centre of San Diego is being investigated as a hate crime, San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said at a news conference, adding that the "circumstances that led up to this" would come out in the days ahead.

Among those killed was a mosque security guard, who police believe "played a pivotal role" in keeping the attack from being "much worse," Wahl said.

Officers carry weapons at the scene of a shooting outside the Islamic Center of San Diego, on Monday —*PTI*

Wahl revealed that officers had been talking to one of the teenagers' mothers earlier in the day after she had contacted police around 9.40am to say her son was missing along with multiple weapons and her vehicle. The mother also found a note, where "definitely hate rhetoric that was involved," he added.

The centre is the largest mosque in San Diego County and includes the Al Rashid School that offers courses in Arabic language, Islamic studies and the Quran for students ages 5 and up, according to its website.

The mosque's director, Imam Taha Hassane called it "extremely outrageous to target a place of worship." —*PTI*

US PAUSES WWII JOINT DEFENCE PACT WITH CANADA

WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

The US is pausing its participation on a joint board with Canada for continental defence that dates back to World War II, the Pentagon announced on Monday, accusing Ottawa of failing "to make credible progress on its defence commitments."

President Donald Trump has long accused Canada and other NATO countries of spending too little on their own militaries. Tensions with Canada also are simmering over tariffs, an expiring North American trade pact, a feud between Trump and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, and the Republican's "jokes" about making Canada the 51st state.

Elbridge Colby, an undersecretary of defence, announced the move on X, noting the increases in defence spending that Canada and other nations agreed to at a summit in 2025. Carney said last year the Canadian government would meet the previous 2 per cent target for this year. —*PTI*

TRUMP ALLIES GET $1.7B AS POTUS DROPS $10B IRS SUIT

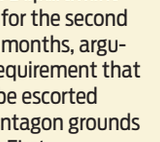
WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

The Justice Department on Monday created an "Anti-Weaponisation Fund" of USD 1.776 billion to compensate Trump's allies who believe they have been unjustly investigated and prosecuted by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

US President Donald Trump had derided the IRS over the alleged leak of his tax returns, and along with his two sons and the Trump Organisation, launched a $10 billion lawsuit against the government agency. The lawsuit has now been dropped.

Democrats and government watchdogs called the fund "corrupt" and unconstitutional. Nearly 100 Democrats have signed a resolution urging the judge to block the resolution, that they said would unjustly enrich people close to the President with taxpayer dollars and open the door to meritless claims of political persecution. —*PTI*

TrumpRx medical site adds 600 generic drugs



Trump on Monday announced that at least 600 generic medications are being added to the government's discounted-drug website TrumpRx, increasing offerings from one of the administration's key initiatives to help Americans struggling with high costs. The expansion comes via a partnership with entrepreneur Mark Cuban's Cost Plus Drug Company, as well as Amazon Pharmacy and GoodRx. Joe Gebbia, co-founder of Airbnb, is the chief design office of TrumpRx.

NYT sues Pentagon again over media restrictions

The New York Times sued the Defence Department on Monday for the second time in five months, arguing that a requirement that journalists be escorted while on Pentagon grounds violates the First Amendment and is "an unconstitutional attempt to prevent independent reporting on military affairs".

Ebola toll in Congo rises to 131; WHO warns of rapid spread

KINSHASA, 19 MAY

The death toll in the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo has risen to 131, with at least 513 suspected cases reported, the Congolese health ministry said on Tuesday. Doctors with the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that the disease may be spreading faster than anticipated, as an American doctor is among the cases of the rare Bundibugyo strain variant in Bunia, capital of the Ituri province.

"These are suspected deaths, and investigations are underway to determine which ones are actually linked to the disease," said Samuel Roger Kamba, the minister of public health.

The WHO on Sunday declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.

Cases have now been confirmed in Bunia, North Kivu's rebel-held capital of Goma, Mongbwalu, Butembo, and Nyakunde.

The WHO's Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on Tuesday that he is "deeply concerned about the scale and speed of the epidemic".

Notably, detection of the outbreak was delayed by weeks with officials blaming cuts to the USAID programme for the lapses. —*PTI*

The WHO has increased the shipping of medical supplies amid the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo —X @OMSRDCONGO

'TANK DAY'

S Korea Starbucks CEO fired over ads on military crackdown

SEOUL, 19 MAY

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Starbucks in South Korea has been dismissed after the company ran a promotional event using slogans that evoked a massacre of pro-democracy protesters during the country's dictatorship era.

CEO Son Jung-hyun was fired for the "inappropriate" campaign, according to a statement. The coffee chain launched a "Tank Day" campaign on 18 May for its "Tank" tumbler series. Notably, this coincided with one of the most politically sensitive days in South Korea's calendar, when citizens commemorate the 1980 democratisation movement in Gwangju, 270km south-west of Seoul.

The uprising was violently suppressed by the South Korean military with the approval and support of the US under the Carter administration, which feared the uprising might spread to other cities and tempt North Korea to interfere. Somewhere between 600–2,300 people were killed.

Shinsegae Group's, which owns a majority of the company operating Starbucks, Chairman Chung Yong-jin "personally ordered" Son's dismissal after a "strict and thorough internal investigation", the conglomerate said.

Yet, the Starbucks promotion also featured the phrase "thwack on the desk", which echoed the dictatorship's infamous 1987 cover-up of the torture death of the student activist Park Jong-chul.

Authorities claimed that an officer "hit the desk with a thwack", causing him to collapse and die, which eventually became a slogan against the government's massive torture practices. —*Agencies*

— FREEPIK

ICRA lowers India's GDP growth estimate to 6.2%

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

India's GDP is likely to grow at 6.2 per cent in FY27, down from the earlier estimate of 6.5 per cent amid elevated crude oil prices, rating agency ICRA said. For FY26, ICRA estimates GDP growth at 7.5 per cent, marginally lower than the National Statistical Office's (NSO) Second Advance Estimate (SAE) of 7.6 per cent for the fiscal.

"ICRA now assumes crude oil prices to average at USD 95/bbl in FY27, against our prior estimate of USD 85/bbl. Consequently, we have pared our baseline forecast for the FY27 GDP growth (at constant 2022-23 prices) to 6.2 per cent from the 6.5 per cent expected earlier," ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said. *—PTI*

Gold rebounds Rs 800 to Rs 1.63 lakh/10g

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Gold prices rebounded by Rs 800 to Rs 1.63 lakh per 10g in New Delhi on Tuesday, supported by easing US-Iran tensions and improved buying sentiment, according to local market sources.The 99.9 per cent purity gold rose to Rs 1,63,600 per 10g (inclusive of taxes) from Rs 1,62,800 a day earlier. Silver, however, fell sharply by Rs 5,000 to Rs 2,71,000 per kilogram due to weak industrial demand and subdued global cues.Analysts said optimism over renewed US-Iran negotiations, along with comments from US President Donald Trump on pausing military action, eased geopolitical concerns and supported gold. In global markets, spot gold was down 0.47 per cent at USD 4,544.78 per ounce, while silver slipped 2.01 per cent. *—PTI*

Power demand hitS high of 257 GW on Monday

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

India's peak power demand hit an all-time high of 257.37 GW on Monday, mainly driven by the increased use of air conditioners and desert coolers, according to power ministry data.The peak power demand on Monday eclipsed the previous all-time high of 256.11 GW on April 25, 2026, at 1538 hrs. Power ministry data says the peak power demand set a new high of 257.37 GW at 1542 hrs on Monday, and it was met.The Power Ministry projects that India's peak power demand will reach 270 GW this summer. Meanwhile, the IMD has predicted heatwave conditions this week in northwest and central India. *—PTI*

Blackstone, Google ally for AI cloud firm

SAN JOSE, 19 MAY

Global tech giant Google and private equity major Blackstone have joined hands to launch a new AI cloud company that will take on CoreWeave with Google's specialised chips, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The attempt is the biggest so far by Google to market its specialised chips and take on the likes of CoreWeave, which uses Nvidia chips for computing infrastructure.

Blackstone will infuse an equity capital of $5 billion in the AI cloud venture and is likely to be a majority owner. The new AI venture is being seen as Google's biggest attempt so far to market its specialised chips called Tensor Processing Units or TPUs. Most of the AI companies use CoreWeave's computing infrastructure that uses chips from Nvidia. *—PTI*

Crude oil futures hit record high of Rs 10,044 per barrel

Kotak warns diesel rates will rise by Rs 37.9, petrol by Rs 28.9

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Crude oil prices surged on Tuesday amid persistent disruptions to global energy supplies caused by the continuing West Asia crisis, with futures on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) touching a record high of Rs 10,044 per barrel during intraday trade.

Crude oil for June delivery later traded Rs 43 higher, or 0.43 per cent up, at Rs 9,967 per barrel in 8,508 lots, after settling at Rs 9,924 on Monday. Analysts said fresh buying by traders and fears over tightening global supplies supported the rally in oil futures.

In international markets, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude traded marginally higher at USD 108.67 per barrel, while Brent crude rose 1.45 per cent to USD 110.48 per barrel

Against this backdrop, Kotak Securities warned that state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) continue to face massive fuel under-recoveries despite the recent Rs 3 per litre increase in petrol and diesel prices implemented from 15 May.

According to the brokerage, under-recoveries are still estimated at Rs 8-9 billion per day, suggesting that further retail price hikes may be unavoidable unless crude prices ease sharply in the near term. At delivered crude prices of around USD 120 per barrel, the burden on refiners could rise to Rs 250-260 billion per month.

- In international markets, West Texas crude traded higher at USD 108.67 per barrel, while Brent rose 1.45 per cent to USD 110 per barrel

Kotak outlined four pricing scenarios for Delhi. Under trade parity pricing, diesel prices may need to rise by Rs 37.9 per litre and petrol by Rs 28.9 per litre. Under export parity pricing with windfall tax, the required hikes were estimated at Rs 13.4 per litre for diesel and Rs 17.1 per litre for petrol. *—PTI*

'RUMOUR-MONGERING'

No plan to monetise gold held by temples: Govt

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Centre on Tuesday firmly denied rumours that it plans to introduce a gold monetisation scheme targeting temple trusts or other religious institutions, calling such claims "completely false, misleading and without any basis".

In a clarification, the Finance Ministry also rejected reports suggesting that gold plates on temple towers, doors and other structures would be classified as part of India's "Strategic Gold Reserves". It urged citizens not to believe or circulate unverified information, warning that such rumours create unnecessary confusion and mislead the public.

The Ministry said any policy decision or government scheme would only be announced through official press releases, government websites and verified communication platforms.

The clarification follows widespread speculation online claiming that the government intended to issue "gold bonds" to temples in exchange for their gold reserves. Some posts further alleged that gold used in temple structures could be brought under national strategic reserves. The rumours gained traction after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during a rally in Hyderabad on 10 May, appealed to citizens to reduce gold purchases, limit foreign travel and revive work-from-home practices to ease pressure on India's foreign exchange reserves. *—PTI*

No relief for rupee as it hits new low of 96.6

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

The Indian rupee plunged to a record intraday low of 96.60 against the US dollar on Tuesday, before settling at 96.52 (provisional). The depreciation was driven by soaring crude oil prices, ongoing foreign capital outflows, and a resilient dollar amid global risk aversion. The rupee has depreciated 1.5 per cent this month and over 7 per cent this year, making it Asia's worst-performing currency in 2026.

Forex traders cited rising crude prices and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz as key vulnerabilities. The rupee opened at 96.38, then fell further to hit 96.60, before closing at 96.52, down 32 paise from the previous close. On Monday, it settled at a record low of 96.20. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said, "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid a strong dollar and rising US treasury yields.

Ongoing geopolitical tensions and FII outflows may also put pressure on the rupee." Meanwhile, the dollar index rose 0.05 per cent to 99.24 amid Iran tensions.

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Brent crude was trading at USD 109.95 per barrel, down 1.92 per cent. US President Donald Trump announced he halted strikes on Iran at the request of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

In domestic markets, the Sensex fell 114.19 points to 75,200.85, with Nifty down 31.95 points to 23,618. Foreign Institutional Investors bought equities worth Rs 2,813.69 crore. *—PTI*

Mkts end lower on selling in blue-chips

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

Indian benchmark equity indices ended lower on Tuesday as late selling in blue-chip stocks, coupled with concerns over a record low rupee and elevated crude oil prices, weighed on market sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 114.19 points, or 0.15 per cent, to close at 75,200.85, after surging as much as 431.23 points during intraday trade. The NSE Nifty slipped 31.95 points, or 0.14 per cent, to settle at 23,618.

Markets initially rallied after US President Donald Trump said he had halted fresh strikes on Iran following requests from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, adding that serious discussions with Tehran were underway. However, gains were erased in the final hour of trade amid profit-booking in heavyweights such as HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries.

Among Sensex losers, Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, Titan, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel and Sun Pharma declined sharply, while Infosys, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra and Tata Consultancy Services ended higher. Foreign Institutional Investors bought equities worth Rs 2,813.69 crore on Monday.

Meanwhile, shares of oil marketing companies rallied after petrol and diesel prices were raised by around 90 paise per litre — the second hike in less than a week. HPCL rose 3.29 per cent, IOC gained 3.10 per cent and BPCL advanced 3 per cent. *—PTI*

HOW MARKETS PERFORMED

DOW (US)	49,536.51	(0.34%) ↓
S&P 500 (US)	7,383.06	(0.55%) ↓
Nasdaq US	25,761.72	(1.26%) ↓
KOSPI S Korea	7,271.66	(3.25%) ↓
Nikkei (Japan)	60,550.59	(0.44%) ↓
Hang Seng (China)	25,797.85	(0.48%) ↑
DAX (Germany)	24,597.50	(1.19%) ↑
FTSE 100 (UK)	10,380.84	(0.55%) ↑

Birla to infuse Rs 4,730 crore into VI

NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

The Aditya Birla Group is set to infuse Rs 4,730 crore into Vodafone Idea as part of the telecom operator's ongoing revival and network expansion plans.

The investment will be made through a preferential issue of up to 430 crore fully convertible warrants to Suryaja Investments Pte Ltd, a promoter group entity of the Aditya Birla Group. The warrants, priced at Rs 11 each, will be converted into equity shares following shareholder approval at an Extraordinary General Meeting scheduled for June 11. Upon full conversion, Suryaja Investments will hold an estimated 3.82 per cent stake in the company.

Vodafone Idea reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 51,970 crore in the March quarter, largely due to a one-time accounting gain after the government reduced its adjusted gross revenue (AGR) liabilities by around 27 per cent to Rs 64,046 crore. Revenue from operations rose nearly 3 per cent year-on-year, while average revenue per user improved to Rs 190.

The company said subscriber additions have turned positive since February 2026. During the quarter, Vi expanded 4G coverage and rolled out 5G services in over 80 cities.

The funding is also expected to support negotiations for a separate Rs 35,000 crore loan package from SBI-led banking consortium for Vi's planned Rs 45,000 crore three-year expenditure programme. *—PTI*

Adani stocks rally after US shuts cases; NDTV surges 7%

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Adani Group stocks rallied on Tuesday after US prosecutors permanently dropped all criminal charges against Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar Adani in a high-profile securities and wire fraud case in New York.

Shares of NDTV surged 7.34 per cent in intraday trade on the BSE, while Adani Green Energy rose 4.27 per cent and Adani Total Gas gained 3.51 per cent. Adani Enterprises climbed 3.12 per cent, while Adani Energy, Adani Power, ACC, Adani Ports and Ambuja Cements also traded higher.

The development follows settlements last week with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), under which Gautam Adani agreed to pay USD 6 million and Sagar Adani USD 12 million without admitting or denying wrongdoing over investor disclosures linked to Indian solar projects.

Separately, the Adani Group agreed to pay USD 275 million to settle allegations by the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) regarding violations of US sanctions on Iran-linked LPG imports. *—PTI*

SC tells SpiceJet to move HC in Rs 144 crore dispute

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Supreme Court asked SpiceJet to approach the Delhi High Court with its plea seeking extension of time to deposit Rs 144 crore in connection with its legal dispute with media baron Kalanithi Maran and Kal Airways.

Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe took note of the submissions made by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi on Tuesday, appearing for Spicejet, who said that the West Asia crisis has impacted the airline's finances.

Referring to a recent government's bailout programme for airlines, which has an outlay of Rs 5,000 crore, Rohatgi sought three months to deposit the amount.

The SC, however, refused to grant time and asked the budget airline to move the high court.

"What happened before the West Asia crisis? Something which has happened on 5 May (Bailout announcement) cannot become a ground for extension of time," the bench remarked.

During the hearing, Rohatgi said, "Private interest must yield to public interest. I have thousands of employees."

The counsel appearing for Kal Airways vehemently opposed the extension of time, saying a review cannot be allowed in guise of an appeal. *— PTI*

StanChart to cut 7,000 jobs to boost AI use

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Standard Chartered plans to cut 7,000 jobs as it ramps up moves to scale AI adoption to make its operations slimmer and more streamlined, Reuters reported.

The bank said it would slash 15 per cent of the corporate functions by 2030. According to a Reuters estimate, the move will translate into 7,000 positions becoming redundant out of the more than 52,000 such roles in the organisation.

The London-headquartered lender aims for more than 15% return on tangible equity in 2028, eventually leading to about 18 per cent in 2030, says a Wall Street Journal report.

The move will hit bank's back-office centres, including those in Chennai, Bangalore, Kuala Lumpur and Warsaw, according to Reuters. The lender also aims for an increase of around 20 per cent in the income per employee by 2028, which will be supported by the planned reduction in corporate functions. *—PTI*

ANTHROPIC CEO WARNS

'Employment crisis soon as AI will wipe out entry-level jobs'

WASHINGTON DC, 19 MAY

Dario Amodei, chief executive of AI company Anthropic, has warned that rapid advances in artificial intelligence could trigger a "serious employment crisis" by replacing large numbers of entry-level white-collar jobs across industries.

Speaking in an interview with Fox News, Amodei said AI capabilities had advanced dramatically in just two years. "Two years ago, it was at the level of a smart high school student; now it is probably at the level of a smart college student and reaching beyond that," he said.

While highlighting AI's potential benefits in sectors such as medicine and energy, he cautioned that the technology could severely disrupt employment.

Tasks such as summarising documents, brainstorming and preparing financial reports were likely to be automated first, he said.

Amodei warned that entry-level white-collar jobs may initially be augmented before being fully replaced by AI systems, adding that major labour market disruption could emerge within one to five years.

He said many industry leaders privately shared similar concerns, but argued that the scale of the challenge had not been fully communicated to the public or lawmakers.

Despite the risks, Amodei said halting AI development was unrealistic due to intense competition, particularly between American and Chinese firms.

He stressed that governments and companies must instead focus on managing the transition through worker education, policy measures and monitoring AI's economic effects. *—PTI*

SOFTWARE JOBS AT PERIL?

Amodei warned that software engineering jobs built around traditional coding could disappear as AI systems become increasingly capable of writing code. He said software creation costs are collapsing, shrinking development time from months and millions of dollars to hours and minimal expense. As a result, firms may no longer need large teams. "There are whole jobs, whole careers that we've built for decades that may not be present," he told.

Indian Open of Surfing to be held from 29-31 May

MANGALURU, 19 MAY

The 7th edition of the Indian Open of Surfing will be held from 29 to 31 May at Blue Bay Tannirbhavi Eco Beach, a vital preparation for Asian Games this year. Organised by the Surfing Federation of India, the event, presented by the New Mangalore Port Authority, is organised by the Surfing Swami Foundation and Mantra Surf Club in collaboration with the Karnataka Surfing Association. SFI vice-president Rammohan Paranjape said, "Every national competition becomes crucial for our athletes as they prepare for international challenges." Karnataka officials reiterated their support, with the championship serving as a major platform for surfers aiming to secure places at the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya. This is the 2nd stop on the National Championship Series. *—PTI*

—ANI

Billie Jean King, 82, earns college degree after 65 yrs

LOS ANGELES, 19 MAY

Billie Jean King celebrated earning her bachelor's degree in history from Cal State Los Angeles, 65 years after first enrolling. She received the degree at the Shrine Auditorium, wearing hot pink glasses and royal blue sneakers. "It's never too late, whatever age you are, whatever your abilities are," she said. King's gown featured a gold stole with her initials and "G.O.A.T." embroidered, along with a tennis racket. She said, "I am so glad I did it. My hope is that one other person will go back to school." King, the first in her family to graduate, discussed her journey from 1961, when she enrolled, to her tennis success, including 20 Wimbledon titles and the 1973 "Battle of the Sexes." She emphasised the importance of learning. *—PTI*

—ANI

Former Australian wicketkeeper John Maclean dies at 80

SYDNEY, 19 MAY

John Maclean, former Australia and Queensland wicketkeeper, died aged 80 after a prolonged illness. Maclean made his Test debut against England in 1978 and played four Tests and two ODIs for Australia. His first-class career began in 1968 with Queensland, where he scored a highest of 156 in Sheffield Shield. He was a key member of Queensland's team, finishing with 385 dismissals, including 354 catches and 31 stumpings, and captained 30 Shield matches. Queensland Cricket chairman Kirsten Pike said, "He flew the flag for Queensland in all he did, as a player, then as a coach, businessman, administrator." *—PTI*

Pant loses Test vice-captaincy to Rahul, out of ODI

RoKo to return, Afghan series squad announced

GUWAHATI, 19 MAY

Flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant was on Tuesday removed as vice-captain of the Indian Test squad for the upcoming one-off match against Afghanistan and dropped from the ODI line-up for the ensuing three-match series against the same opponents.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the squads on Tuesday, with Shubman Gill set to lead the side in both formats. KL Rahul replaced Pant as vice-captain in the Test team, while Shreyas Iyer was named deputy in the ODI squad.

India will host Afghanistan for a one-off Test in Mullanpur from 6 June, followed by three ODIs in Dharamsala, Lucknow and Chennai between 14 to 20 June.

Senior batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli return to the ODI side alongside Rahul. However, the participation of Rohit and Hardik Pandya remains subject to fitness clearance.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been rested from both assignments as part of workload management, while veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja was also left out. Selection committee chairman Ajit Agarkar said Bumrah would return for the England tour later this summer.

Spinner Manav Suthar and pacer Gurnoor Brar earned maiden Test call-ups, while Prince Yadav was named in the ODI squad. Harsh Dubey, Prince Yadav and Gurnoor Brar are among three uncapped players selected for the 50-over side.

Ishan Kishan has been included as the second wicketkeeper in the ODI squad, while Kuldeep Yadav will spearhead the spin attack alongside all-rounders Washington Sundar and Nitish Kumar Reddy. *—PTI*

KKR face must-win test; MI eye spoils

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

Their campaign hanging by a thread, Kolkata Knight Riders will have no option but to go all out against an already-eliminated Mumbai Indians in a crucial IPL match, here on Wednesday.

A defeat will officially end KKR's playoff hopes for the second successive season under Ajinkya Rahane after their disappointing eighth-place finish in 2025, a year after lifting the title under Shreyas Iyer.

Even a win, however, may not be enough for the Rahane-led side as KKR's fate will still depend on Punjab Kings' away match against Lucknow Super Giants on Saturday.

If Punjab win, KKR's final league fixture against Delhi Capitals here on Sunday will become a dead rubber.

Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad have sealed playoff berths, while Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians are out.

That leaves five teams - Punjab Kings (13 points), Rajasthan Royals (12), CSK (12), Delhi Capitals (12) and KKR (11) - battling for the lone remaining playoff spot. Only Rajasthan Royals and KKR have two matches left.

> **Chennai Super Kings are clearly in a transition phase in the post-Dhoni era, and it's important for everyone around the franchise, fans, stakeholders, and the team itself, to recognise that rebuilding takes time.**
>
> -Ravichandran Ashwin, former India cricketer

Rajasthan have the simplest equation - win both remaining games against LSG and MI to seal qualification. KKR, on the other hand, not only need to win both their matches but also hope Punjab stumble against LSG, as Punjab can still finish on 15 points with a significantly superior net run rate.

Shah Rukh Khan-owned KKR has won five of its last six matches, but the turnaround came too late. For Mumbai Indians, the focus will be on ending a disappointing season on a positive note and spoiling KKR's playoff push.

It has been a forgettable campaign for MI, who have used three captains, with Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah leading in Hardik's absence. *—PTI*

SUPERBET CHESS CLASSIC

Praggs draws to stay at 2nd in Super Classic Chess

BUCHAREST, 19 MAY

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out his fourth consecutive draw, sharing the point with American Wesley So in the fifth round of the Superbet Chess Classic, part of the Grand Chess Tour in Bucharest.

The 45-move encounter saw Praggnanandhaa opt for the Berlin Defence, with So gaining slight pressure in the middlegame before the Indian held firm to secure half a point.

On a day of all drawn games, Germany's Vincent Keymer maintained his half-point lead on 3.5 points after drawing with Dutch player Anish Giri. Praggnanandhaa is now tied for second place alongside Giri and Jorden van Foreest.

France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Wesley So share fifth place on 2.5 points, while Fabiano Caruana of the United States and Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov are on two points, with Sindarov having a game in hand. Romania's Bogdan-Daniel Deac is ninth on 1.5 points, ahead of France's Alireza Firouzja.

In other games, Vachier-Lagrave drew with van Foreest, Sindarov held Firouzja, and Deac split the point with Caruana.

Firouzja returned to action after missing the previous round due to an ankle injury, playing from his room against Sindarov.

Tuesday is the rest day, with four rounds remaining in the USD 3,50,000 prize-money tournament. *—PTI*

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa —X/SUPERCLASSICCHESS

Squad in good shape for T20 World Cup: Smriti Mandhana

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

Unwilling to divulge much about the Indian women's cricket team's preparations for the T20 World Cup next month, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday said all she can reveal is that the players are in good shape for the 12-team tournament.

The women's T20 World Cup will be played in England and Wales from 12 June with ODI World Cup winners India set to take on arch-rivals Pakistan in their tournament-opener on 14 June. "The camp has gone well and I would like to keep it at that," Mandhana said at a press conference. "What I would say is that all the girls are looking in good shape, they have been practising really well and a lot of hard work has gone behind it."The 15-member Indian squad underwent a training camp at the Centre of Excellence (COE) in Bengaluru and is set to depart for England on 22 May for a three-match T20I series against the hosts before the World Cup. *—PTI*

MI'S INJURED KOCK, BAWA OUT OF IPL

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

Mumbai Indians wicketkeeper-batter Quinton de Kock and pace-bowling all-rounder Raj Angad Bawa were on Tuesday ruled out of the remainder of the IPL season due to injuries.

Already eliminated from the playoff race, Mumbai Indians have two matches left - against Kolkata Knight Riders here on Wednesday and Rajasthan Royals on Sunday.

De Kock is don with a tendon injury in his left wrist, which he sustained ahead of MI's home game against Sunrisers Hyderabad. Bawa suffered a ligament tear in his right thumb when playing against Punjab Kings. De Kock played three matches this season. Bawa made three appearances for MI this season. *—PTI*

Masood, Babar steady Pak's chase against B'desh

SYLHET, 19 MAY

Captain Shan Masood and Babar Azam lifted Pakistan to 101 for 2 at lunch on Day 4 of the second cricket test after Bangladesh's bowlers removed both openers.

Masood was unbeaten on 41 and Babar was 24 not out in a 60-run third-wicket stand that steadied the innings after Pakistan slipped to 41-2 in pursuit of a daunting victory target of 437 runs.

Pace bowler Nahid Rana gave Bangladesh the first breakthrough when he dismissed Abdullah Fazal (6), who steered a short-pitch ball to gully.

Soon after offspinner Mehidy Hasan trapped Azan Awais lbw for 21.

Masood and Babar resisted, negotiating Nahid Rana's bowling well and keeping the runs flowing.

Bangladesh was bowled out for 278 in the first innings, thanks to Litton Das's 126 before dismissing Pakistan for 232.

The hosts rode on a 137 from Mushfiqur Rahim to put on 390 in the second innings, setting Pakistan the 400-plus target for a series-leveling victory.No other team has successfully chased more than 418 runs for victory in test cricket.

Bangladesh won the first test by 104 runs. *—PTI*

MALAYSIA MASTERS SUPER 500

Chaliha enters women singles main draw

KUALA LUMPUR, 19 MAY

Indian shuttler Ashmita Chaliha stormed into the women's singles main draw of the Malaysia Masters Super 500 in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday after a hard-fought qualifying win.

Chaliha defeated Chinese Taipei's Pai Yu-po 21-23, 21-16, 21-16 in a 56-minute battle, recovering strongly after dropping the opening game. She will next face Indonesia's Thalita Ramadhani Wiryawan in the first round of the main draw.

However, it was disappointment for Aakarshi Kashyap, who went down 21-15, 20-22, 7-21 to Korea's Park Ga Eun in her qualifying match.

In men's doubles, India's Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun produced a major upset, defeating seventh seeds and French pair Christo Popov and Toma Junior Popov 21-19, 21-15 to reach the second round.

Ashmita Chaliha in action —PTI

They will next meet the winner of the clash between Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando-Daniel Marthin and China's Hu Ke Yuan-Lin Xiang Yi.

- In men's doubles, India's Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun produced a major upset, defeating seventh seeds and French pair Christo Popov and Toma Junior Popov 21-19, 21-15 to reach the second round.

In mixed doubles, Sathwik Reddy Kanapuram and Radhika Sharma advanced with a straight-games win over Malaysia's Datu Anif Isaac Datu Asrah and Clarissa San. However, Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam exited after a three-game defeat to Canada's Jackie Dent and Crystal Lai. *—PTI*

MARESCA TO TAKE OVER

Guardiola to leave Man City post season

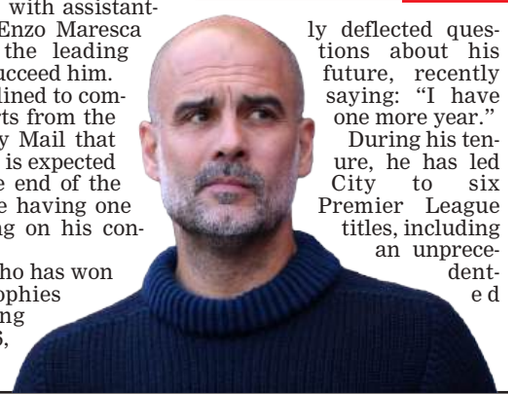
MANCHESTER, 19 MAY

- The club declined to comment on reports from the BBC and Daily Mail that the 55-year-old is expected to leave at the end of the season, despite having one year remaining on his contract.

Pep Guardiola's record-breaking 10-year spell at Manchester City could be nearing its end, according to reports in the British media, with assistant-turned-coach Enzo Maresca emerging as the leading candidate to succeed him.

The club declined to comment on reports from the BBC and Daily Mail that the 55-year-old is expected to leave at the end of the season, despite having one year remaining on his contract.

Guardiola, who has won 17 major trophies since joining City in 2016, has repeatedly deflected questions about his future, recently saying: "I have one more year."



During his tenure, he has led City to six Premier League titles, including an unprecedented four in a row from 2021 to 2024, and the historic treble in 2022–23, winning the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup. His sides also became the first in English football to reach 100 points in a season and complete a domestic treble in 2018–19.

This season, City have already won the League Cup and FA Cup and remain second in the Premier League, five points behind Arsenal, needing a win over Bournemouth to stay in the title race.

Guardiola's influence has reshaped English football, popularising a possession-based style that has been widely replicated across all levels of the game.

However, his later years at the club have coincided with an ongoing legal case involving more than 100 financial charges brought by the Premier League in 2023, which City deny.

Maresca, who previously worked as City's academy coach and assistant during the treble-winning season, also led Leicester City to promotion and later managed Chelsea, winning the Club World Cup and Conference League. *—PTI*

Neymar in Brazil's World Cup squad amid fitness issues

RIO DE JANEIRO, 19 MAY

Neymar has been named in Brazil's 26-man World Cup squad despite doubts over his fitness, marking his fourth appearance at the tournament.

The 34-year-old forward, Brazil's all-time top scorer with 79 goals, has struggled for full fitness since suffering a left ACL injury in October 2023. He has featured eight times for Santos this year, scoring four goals and providing two assists.

Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti said Neymar's selection was based on experience and improving fitness levels. "He has improved his fitness, he will be an important player in this World Cup," Ancelotti said in Rio de Janeiro. He added that Neymar could continue building fitness before the tournament opener and brings leadership and a positive influence to the squad.

Shortly before the announcement, Neymar updated his Instagram bio, adding "Brazil" alongside Santos, signalling his return to the national set-up.

The squad also includes key stars Vinicius Júnior and Raphinha, as Brazil prepares for the tournament in North America.

Ancelotti, who took charge in May 2025 and recently extended his contract to the 2030 World Cup, has faced injury setbacks, missing players such as Rodrygo and Estevão.

Brazil will open their World Cup campaign against Morocco in New Jersey on June 13, followed by Group C matches against Haiti and Scotland.

Brazil squad includes Alisson, Ederson and Weverton as goalkeepers; defenders Marquinhos, Gabriel Magalhães and Bremer; midfielders Casemiro and Bruno Guimarães; and forwards Endrick, Matheus Cunha and Neymar among others. *—PTI*